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F R E Q U E N T C O M M U N I C A T I N G,
O C C A S I O N E D

By the late OVERTURE of the SYNOD
of Glasgow and Arr upon that Subject.

By W. Stoddard & Inchtutes

*Denunciamus igitur, omnesque a Deo rogamus, si quis aut caput ali-
quid, aut etiam sententiam, cum sancto Dei verbo pugnantem, hic
animadverterit, ut pro sua humanitate, proque eo amore, quo Christum
Christique gregem prosequitur, nos per literas admoneat: id qui fece-
rit, sancte ei repromittimus, nos eidem, aut ex ore Dei, hoc est, ex
sacrae scripturae oraculo satisfacturos, aut quod secus a nobis dictum
demonstraverit, emendaturos.*

*See Mr. Stoddard's
Conclusion*

Praef. ad Confes. Scotic.

" But such is the Nature of Flesh, it will be wise, and have a Stroke
" in God's Doings; yea, how wilfully it causeth Man to main-
" tain his own Fantasies, is manifest to them which have per-
" used the antient Records of the Church.—Seeing, therefore,
" God's Word doth approve it, Antiquity beareth Witness
" thereof, and the best reformed Churches have received the
" same, no Man can reprove it, except he will condemn God's
" Word, despise Antiquity, and utterly condemn the godly re-
" formed Churches.

Pref. to Book of Com. Order.

G L A S G O W:

Printed, and sold by the Booksellers in Glasgow and Edinburgh.
M D C C X L I X.



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L E T T E R, *etc.*

DEAR SIR,

WHILE many are complaining of the languishing State of real Religion, does it not give you some Sort of Relief, to see so fair an Attempt towards the Revival of it, in that likely Mean just now proposed by the Synod of *Glasgow*, in their Overture about frequent Communicating?

This is, in itself, a Design very important; and which, if carried into Execution, may, through the divine Blessing, be attended with many good Consequences. To contribute my little Share, to help forward what hath both my Approbation and good Wishes, you have this present Trouble: If you are surprized I should give you so much, upon a Subject, which, among all who ever looked into what is called Learning in Divinity, is incontestable, and in which the most ignorant among us have been so far instructed, that, at Sacraments, all Sorts of Ministers have been in Use to inform them, "That the Primitive Christians did communicate often, nay, every Lord's Day;" my only and true Apology is, That having observed, among our heedless and self-deceiving Race, the reviving a known, acknowledged, but long neglected Part of Duty, to be a Matter of no less Difficulty, than is the bringing them into the Subjection of what is new, and heretofore undiscovered, I conclude, that Pains and Excitement are no less needful in the one than in the other Case. The first may be likened to Recovery from a Consumption; the last, to the Beginnings of a weak Life; in the last, however, the Hopes of arriving at Vigour are generally better founded than in the first. In the one Case, Habit and the Prejudice of Custom prevail against neglected Truth. Curiosity and Novelty, interwoven with our Nature, help forward in the other. If in either, any good Degree of Conformity to our Duty is arrived at, it is from God; but, in the one, *the knowing these Things, and not doing them*, may justly occasion the Lord's not granting his Spirit, to invigorate

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to

to Life; whereas that Provocation not being in the other, he may wisely make this same Spirit of Curiosity and Novelty become subservient to carry forward more valuable Purposes: We in this Nation, I think, are but too evidently in the Case of the Consumption, as to the frequent remembering of our Lord's Death in his Supper. Long have we had the Truth about it with us; long have we acknowledged it; and long have we had the Means of yielding to it in our own Hands; but hitherto have less, much less, submitted to it than we ought; yet, after all, what can we expect will prevail? the Truth surely; it is the Force of Truth only can have that Influence; where Truth is, the Spirit is promised to be; and Truth, in the Hand of the Spirit, can alone bring Men, over all Prejudices and Customs, into Christian Subjection. Diligence in declaring the Truth, being our Duty towards it, and the Way wherein we may best expect it will prosper in our Hands to the Purposes for which it is given; and this being, as I Judge, a proper Season for insisting on what is Truth on this Subject, such of it, therefore, as I have found, and such Persuasion upon it as I can use, I have sent unto you, flattering myself, that what I shall say, will either beget in you stronger Impressions about the Duty of frequent Communicating, or excite you to a stricter Inquiry yourself into this Matter: for, wherein I think it may be safely promised, you shall not only have that Satisfaction which ever attends the Discovery of Truth, and that Firmness of Persuasion, the native Fruit of exacter Examination, but that Binding of Heart also, to endeavour what you can to bring the Proposal to bear, not only because it is reasonable, but, which of all Motives is the strongest to a Christian, because it is the Will of Christ; and, in that Event, neither you nor I shall be displeased at the Trouble this long Letter will give us.

The first Question, then, that naturally occurs, to one inquiring how often Christians should eat the Lord's Supper, is, What hath Christ himself, who made the Institution, said about it? or what Directions hath the Holy Spirit given, who revealed the Mind of Christ to his Church after he was ascended? As to this, in the first Place, we find the Words of Jesus Christ in the Evangelists; we shall take them from *Luke xxii. 15.* *Jesus said unto them, with Desire have I desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer;* and then, in a solemn Way, instituting the Supper, he said, *Do this in Remembrance of me;* adding, as in *Matth. xxvi. 29.* *But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of the Fruit of the Vine until that Day, when I drink it new with you in my Father's Kingdom.* These Passages, you will acknowledge, Dear Sir, cannot be read without observing, that as the Death of our
Lord,

Lord, whereby he was to redeem his Brethren, was much desired, and longed for by him, before he suffered it, so was the Institution of the Memorial of that Death by Bread and Wine much upon his Heart also. Nor is this to be looked upon as a contemptible Circumstance between Christ and his People in the World; for by this are they to keep up the Remembrance of his Love in dying for them, among themselves, and hereby are they to shew him forth as crucified among Men; and that during all the Time of his Absence from them, even till he come again; and this Action, and Christ's instituting of it, appears to be the more important in his own Eye, and calls for the greater Attention to it from his People; because of the above-mentioned most gracious Promise, which, according to my Apprehension, he annexes to the Observation of it; *I will not henceforth drink of the Fruit of the Vine, until that Day that I drink it new with you in my Kingdom.* For what Interpretation can be so natural to these Words as this, that as Christ, according to all the Evangelists who narrate this Matter, added these Words to the Institution of his Supper, so he meant them as a Promise, that he would not forget his *Friends when in his Kingdom*, but would give them the new Joy of it, in their being engaged in this Action, which in so peculiar a Manner belonged to it; and every other and After-circumstance, indeed, leads to this Meaning. Christ himself, as far as relates to his own Person, certainly drank of the *new Wine of his Kingdom*, when, upon his Ascension, he *received the Joy set before him*, in his enduring the Cross, and when, as the Phrases are in the Parallel Place in Luke, *It was fulfilled in the Kingdom, and the Kingdom of God did come*; and he, doubtless, in like Manner, made his Disciples taste of that same new Wine*, in *shedding forth into their Hearts the Holy Ghost*, Acts ii. 33. not only to enable them to work Wonders, but also to give them Joy, according to his promised Name, *the Comforter*. And what was the Comfort, which, as proceeding from

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Christ,

* The disciples, we find, were laughed to scorn under this very similitude, when the Holy Ghost came down upon them, Acts ii. 13. *Others, mocking, said, these men are filled with new wine*; even as the Lord himself was once derided; *He saved others, himself he cannot save.* In both instances, the truth was expressed in the derision; Christ was saving others, and for that reason could not save himself with that sort of salvation, by coming down from the cross; and the disciples here too were truly filled with the glorious new wine of their Lord's kingdom, even the Holy Ghost in his power and consolations; while their enemies were ridiculing them under that similitude; God thereby, in his abundant grace and wisdom, over-ruling and conveying

Christ, the Spirit gave them, but that which the Lord's People never had before, even the new Joy, not of a promised, but of a finished, Redemption? whereof now they had Assurance from the Father, by the Resurrection of Christ from the Dead, and his giving him Glory, that their Faith and Hope might be in God. This was no other, could be no other, than the new Wine of the Kingdom, and that which shall be in the Kingdom to Eternity. In having Christ, the Saints are possessed of the great new Thing the Lord was to create on the Earth, *Jer.* xxxi. 22. and *1 Cor.* ii. 7, etc. The other new Things, as Access, Conformity to him, and Songs, *Rev.* i. 5, 6. chap. v. 9, 10. *1 John* iii. 1.—which shall be enjoyed in Heaven for ever, as they are begun on Earth, and so not altogether new; so have they all their Foundation in what is already revealed to the Saints, even *Christ in them the Hope of such Glory*; and the Comfort of this, by the Spirit, is the new Wine of the Kingdom of God.—If then the Consolations of the Spirit, in the finished Redemption of Christ, be the new Wine of the Kingdom, as it certainly is, and if it is now fulfilled in the Kingdom, and who will say it is not? then is this Passage, connected by the Lord, as we have seen, with his Supper, a noble Promise of his Presence with his People therein, and by him fulfilled to them, whenever in that Action, he *supps with them, and they with him.*

And from what is said, is the following an unjust Inference? that when, in our great Salvation, the Redeemer himself, in the much to be remembered Night of his entering on his Sufferings, calls those, whom he hath loved to Death, to remember him, and that Death, by which he ransoms them, by a public Action before the World, promising his Presence in their so doing. It might be expected, that all who are, or desire to be under so high an Obligation to him as Redemption, would be very punctual in obeying his Command in that Matter, and in attending to all the Circumstances he hath prescribed in it, and particularly, as to the Frequency, that the Inquiry among the Redeemer's Friends would rather be, How often would the Master have us to remember him among ourselves, and glory in his Cross before Men, by shewing forth his Death in his Supper? How often would he fulfil the promised Blessing of his Presence in that Action to us, rather than how seldom? And which

a remedy and support to the hearts of his own, even the woman's seed, against the cruel mockings, that venom of the Serpent, and his seed, in the very manner of their throwing it out against his people; so, still fulfilling what was said at the beginning, *That the Serpent can only bruise the heel*, i. e. cannot rise to the vitals, can only touch the outward and lowest parts,

which of these two most becomes our Reason as Men, our Obligations as Christians, or our Duty as Servants, is submitted to every unbiassed Mind, to every undefiled Conscience to determine.

Thus then we see, that the Lord Jesus, before he died, appointed his Supper as a Memorial of him, which Christians are led by every Tie, and every Encouragement to honour and remember him in; but how often or how seldom they were to do this, is what it doth not appear from any of the Evangelists, the Lord while on Earth left any Injunctions to his Followers about; yet were they not long under any Uncertainty in this Particular: There were many Things, you know, which Jesus Christ, for wise Reasons, did not tell his Disciples while he was yet with them, but left to the Revelation of his Spirit, who, for this amongst other Ends, was to come to them, that he might lead them into all Truth, and settle all Things concerning his Church. He actually did so: He came and fulfilled that End, and revealed the mind of Christ to his Disciples; and we see how the Persons, in whom he was, speak concerning every Direction, every Determination they gave about the Customs of Churches, 1 Cor. xiv. 37. *If any Man think himself to be a Prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge, that the Things that I write unto you are the Commandments of the Lord.* To apply this to the present Subject, we find that one of the first Things the Spirit led the Apostles and the Believers in Christ to, was a frequent, if not daily, Remembrance of the Lord in his Supper. This clearly appears from that noted Place, Acts ii. 42. Ἦσαν δὲ προσηκτερεύοντες—τῇ κλάσει τοῦ ἄρτου. *They continued stedfastly in the breaking of Bread.* You see this Translation rises not beyond the Emphasis of the original Expression, that the “insisting with Zeal and Perseverance” in that Duty,” are the Ideas which fill your Mind when the Greek Words are repeated.—If then the Example or the Customs which the Apostles of Christ taught the Church be the Commandments of the Lord, the Question is, how we in Scotland are obeying this Command, or, how our having the Lord’s Supper once yearly can reconcile with προσηκτερεύοντες—τῇ κλάσει τοῦ ἄρτου? As it cannot escape Observation, so it makes the Matter more remarkable, that the same Perseverance is applied in this Place to *Doctrine* (preaching it, no Doubt) and *Prayers*, as is to *breaking of Bread*. But would he who among us can sit easiest down under the unfrequent Administrations of the Supper allow, that a Church could be said to have any reasonable Conformity to the apostolic Practice here described in *Prayers* and *Doctrines*, if there was not in it a more frequent Access to these last mentioned Duties, than there is, by every Stretch, to the breaking of Bread, to the most willing Mind with us? And how
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we come to make such a Difference between our Practice as to this, and the rest of these Duties, is what I would willingly hear a good Reason for.—That one that is given about the Difference of the Spirit's Influences between the Time of Pentecost and these latter Days, I shall hereafter consider at large, not to interrupt the present Design of bringing together what the Scripture says on this Subject by too long a Digression. In the mean Time, think you not, it may be warrantably said, that in this Passage there is apostolic, inspired Example for Christians continuing stedfastly in the breaking of Bread?—As much so, as for continuing stedfastly in Preaching or Prayers in Christian Assemblies?—And that those who would make this Text an Argument, and where shall they find a better, for not neglecting these last every Sabbath Day, must either yield that it is as strong for the not neglecting the first also, or else shew some other Passage of equal Authority, making an Exception of this from the others as less necessary for Christians to be habitual and constant in. But as this, I suppose, will be given up as impossible, what can we do but adhere to the above Conclusion from it?

But if any, through Prejudice, were still to insist, that this was an extraordinary Season and Example, what will they allege against what we find in Acts xx. 7. as a Scripture Example for communicating every Lord's Day, as well as for praying or preaching the Apostle's Doctrine upon it? For here it cannot be said the Time was at the famous Pentecost, when it was 25 Years after it (it was *Anno 58 Paul was at Troas*;)—nor that the Place was *Jerusalem*, out of which the Rod of God's Strength was to come, on Christ's being set at the Father's Right-hand, when it is *Troas*, no very considerable City in lesser *Asia*;—nor that the Practice was found among the Apostles assembled at the great Effusion of the Spirit, when it is found among Christians having his *Grace* without his *Gifts*, that we know of, in any remarkable Way, or more remarkably than any other Church;—nor that this was at a remarkable Feast, when it was certainly on an ordinary Sabbath, as you see by the Context*. For the Description is thus, Ver. 7. *And on the first Day of the Week, when the Disciples came together to break Bread, Paul preached, etc.*—And who can look on this Place without discerning, that as breaking of Bread was the principal, so was it the ordinary Service of the Day, and the very Intention of the Christians

* Paul had stayed at Philippi during the days of unleavened bread, in five days from thence he came to Troas, and that being on Monday, he waited seven days, till the stated time for the Lord's Supper, even the first day of the week should come.

istians coming together? That they were not so much gathered to hear the Apostle preach, (though, no Doubt, they would have otherwise been assembled for that End before he had departed, as probable he was not idle that Week, but, according to his Custom, employed in exhorting from House to House,) as that being gathered to obey the Lord in breaking of Bread, he took the Opportunity, and preached unto them. This I think a fair Representation of this Text; and what the fair Inference from it is, I leave you to make.

I would add, that the more you attend to the Passages which relate to this Matter in the New Testament, the more shall you be persuaded, and not the less, if you attend to the Expressions in the Original, that this was truly the Intention of the Christians in coming together on the Sabbath Days: For Example, when you remember the Use that these Phrases, *coming together*, and *into one Place*, are applied to in the Scriptures; can you read the remarkable Passage in 1 Cor. xi. without observing the first Day of the Week as an ordinary Time of meeting for the End of breaking of Bread in that Church?—The Apostle reproving their Divisions and Abuses on the Subject of the Supper, says, Ver. 20. *When you come together into one Place, this is not* (as you presently behave, tho' you mean it) *to eat the Lord's Supper.* And then shewing the Difference between that and the other Suppers, by repeating the Institution, as he had received it from Christ himself, he adds, in Ver. 33. *Wherefore, my Brethren, when ye come together to eat* (i. e. the Lord's Supper) *tarry one for another.*—Here is no Reproof, you see, to the *Corinthians* for coming together into one Place, according to their professed Design, to eat the Lord's Supper;—nor any Insinuation as if he wished them to meet seldomer for that End.—But supposing that to do this was the very End of their being gathered together into one Place, on the first Day of the Week,—and that this End was right, if they pursued it lawfully, he only corrects the Abuses which, from other Suppers being blended with it, had crept in among them.—This laid together, makes it, I think, as evident, that the Christians ordinarily met together on every Sabbath Day to break Bread at *Corinth*, as the former Passage was clear in declaring, that for that End the Christians were gathered together on the first Day of the Week at *Troas*.—

And having once this Key, we may not only observe other Places of the New Testament agreeable to, but a Confirmation of what is now represented: Does not the Passage in 1 Cor. x. 16, etc. in that Chapter where it is said, *the Cup of Blessing which we bless, is it not the Communion of the Blood of Christ? the Bread which we break, is it not the Communion of the Body of Christ?*

Christ? etc. look the same Way? The Tenses, you see, are all present, which makes the Ordinance here described appear, a distinguishing indeed, but at the same Time an ordinary, rather than an unusual Action in the Churches of Christ.— And in the Discipline described in *1 Cor. v.* penult, and concluded thus, *and with such an one, no not to eat*, does not the whole Context (as he is addressing them here not as private Persons but as a Church) and this Exclusion shew, that it was from the ordinary Privileges of Christians that the supposed Backsliders, *Ver. 11.* were to be kept back?

Before I have done with this Part of the Subject, which relates to the Scriptures, there is one farther Observation you must indulge my making to you; the Thing struck myself a little, and we are such strange Sort of Creatures, that we generally think what appears just to us, will, or should appear, so to others.— It was formerly taken Notice of, that from the Relation of the Institution of this Ordinance by the three Evangelists who recorded it, it does not appear, that our Lord spoke any Thing about the Frequency of it: It is indeed the same Thing to the Churches, when the Spirit, as was observed, proceeding from the Lord Jesus, knowing his Mind, and agreeing in one with him in it, led them to a frequent Communion in that Ordinance as his Will; yet this hinders not what now is to be mentioned as coming from the Lord himself, after he was glorified, from being a beautiful Confirmation of the same Thing, supposing the Remark well founded; both the one and the other making the Frequency of this Ordinance rather more the undisputed Duty of Christians.— Tho' then, as we have said, Christ, in instituting this Supper on Earth, spoke not of his Disciples being often or seldom engaged in it, yet, as *Paul* relates his receiving it from the Lord, there is this Mention of it, *1 Cor. xi. As oft as ye drink of it.* Now, we can guess pretty nearly when *Paul* heard this, and all his Wisdom in the Gospel, from Christ: Compare *1 Cor. xi. 23.* with *Gal. i. 11,—17.* He was converted, you know, the second Year after Christ's Death; and it is agreed he received not the Revelation, described *Gal. i.* of which that Particular, mentioned *1 Cor. xi. 23.* is a Part, at that Time. For *Ananias* told him, *Acts xxii. 14.* *he should afterwards know his Will, and see that just one, and should hear the Voice of his Mouth:* As the Fulfilment of which Prophecy, *Paul* immediately adds, *Ver. 17. When he came again* (that is, the second Time) *to Jerusalem, he had a Trance in the Temple:* This, we know, was 14 Years before he wrote the second Epistle to the *Corinthians*, Chap. *xii.* of that Epistle, which being *Anno 58.* makes that Trance, and *Paul's* receiving his Apostleship, and his

his Wisdom for it, and his hearing Things unutterable, to have been *Acts 44* which was eleven Years after Christ's Ascension and Glory. See *Ben/au* on the Place. What I would observe then from this is, that the Lord himself, eleven Years after he had been in Glory, delivering his Will to *Paul*, about this Ordinance of the Supper, and therein mentioning the Frequency of it, which he had not done formerly, must have a Respect to that Frequency which he knew was, and had been among his Disciples for so many Years.— And as the Circumstance of the Time does not make this Mention of Frequency by the Lord Jesus less remarkable, nor argue the less Approbation of it, so the Indefiniteness of the Expression, *as oft*, in fair Construction, must rather be understood to point out his not rebuking that more frequent occasional remembering him on this Ordinance, which he knew was among his People on other Days * besides his own Day, than an allowance to them to neglect that stated Time, and to obey that Command as seldom as they pleased, which you know is but too often the injudicious Meaning put by many on this Expression.— Tell me, Dear Sir, if I have strained in this Observation, or if we have not in this, pretty clearly from the Lord's own Mouth, many Years after he was glorified, his Approbation of what was then the Practice of his Churches, the remembering him in his Supper every Lord's Day at least.— Have we the *Gentiles* then received a new Apostle from Heaven (since our great one, *Paul*, heard this from Christ in the third Heavens, and which, as from him, he delivered unto us,) telling us, the Men of these latter Ages, that it is as agreeable unto Jesus Christ, that he should be now seldom, as it was heretofore, that he should be often remembered by his Disciples in his Supper?— Or, by what Authority is this Alteration made in the Worship and Church of Christ? for an Alteration beyond all Peradventure it is.

Whatever Way then one turns himself in this Argument, from Scripture he finds nothing but a Direction to Frequency in this Ordinance thereby.— If we think of it in the View wherein Christ instituted it, as the Memorial of him, and his finished Redemption, and compare it with his other Appointments for that same End, such as the Sabbath Day itself, the Ministry of the Word in Preaching or Prayer, the Intention of all which are evidently the same with this Ordinance of the Supper, *namely*, to represent

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* That the first Christians received the Lord's Supper oftener than on the Lord's day, is known and acknowledged by all learned men, and will appear by several citations (among many other proofs which might be brought) I shall have occasion to make afterwards.

or attain the same Salvation, and the Experience of that Grace which, in this Life, is the Beginning of it — We shall find the like Reasons for continuing with equal Stedfastness in them all. — Or if any think, that in the Lord's Supper there is a more lively Representation, or more remarkable Sealing to be expected, by the Spirit, of the Blessings of Salvation, on the Souls of Believers, than in the other Means of Grace, is not the Inference preposterous, therefore we should be less frequently engaged in it? — And if the Reason for being oft engaged in this Duty, in a Comparison with the other Institutions of Christianity, is looked for in the Scripture in the Way of *Authority* and *Command*, how will the Argument stand? — Do we not find the same Foundation in this View, for Communion, as for Preaching every Lord's Day? nay, as for the religious Observation of that Day itself? We see for the one, inspired Practice, *Acts* xx. 7. *1 Cor.* xiv. 23, — 25. and other such places: And for the other, that same *Acts* xx. 7. *1 Cor.* xvi. 2. And we think, that in these we vindicate well the change of the *Sabbath Day*, and the sanctifying of it for holy Purposes, against Opposers; reckoning them defective in their Profession of Christianity, if not living in Opposition to its Spirit and Rules, who act not accordingly; but, can we feel the *Force* of a *Law* so strongly in the one Case, and does it make so *flender Impressions* upon us in the other? Why it should be thus, is not so easy, it may be, to tell, when confessedly no Argument can be formed from these Places for the one, that is not of equal Force at least for the other. — From what has been said then, is it not plain, that the whole Spirit, Law, and Practice, we can find in the Scripture, runs towards frequent Communicating? that on every *Sabbath Day*, Christians, at first, thus approached, thus worshipped the Lord, thus had Communion with him, and with one another? — And I should now proceed to call to your Remembrance other Things giving Light to this Matter, if I were not bound, by Promise, in the first Place, to consider an Objection against this Practice, or rather an Apology, why we, the Christians of latter Ages, are not in the same Way with the first Christians in it. — I had in speaking, you will remember, p. 7, 8. on *Acts* ii. 42. observed, that if there was a Reason from the inspired Practice there described, for our continuing every Lord's Day in Preaching and Prayers, there was also one for the same Constancy in the Lord's Supper, and said, that I would afterwards consider that Ground which was given for the Difference of the Christians Practice in these Days, from that of their antient Brethren, as alleged to flow from the more distinguishing Influences of the Spirit that were at that Time of *Pentecost*, than are experienced in these latter Days. Suffer me now a little to examine this.

this. It is often then represented, that the Time whereof *Acts* ii. 42. is a Description, was an extraordinary Season of the Spirit's Effusion; that the Apostles and Christians were full of him, and were therefore more fitted for a frequent Engagement in the solemn Action of the Supper than we now are, and therefore we are or may be seldomer so employed: But, can you be a Moment in discerning in this Observation less Consideration than you would wish to find in the good Men that make it, and in the humble good Meaning they seem to express in it? For,

1st, Does it not seem, that Ideas entirely distinct are here jumbled together, in Part at least occasioning a Mistake in those who make or depend upon the Observation?—The Time of *Pentecost* was indeed extraordinary for the Spirit's Effusion, but how? for the Signs and Wonders, no Doubt; in the working of which, by the Apostles and other Christians, the Holy Ghost appeared remarkably poured down; but if this be at all included in the Notion of the Spirit's extraordinary Effusion, as occasioning or being a Reason for a more frequent Engagement in the Lord's Supper, the Connection is not good, as we know these Gifts in themselves give not Fitness for it; and many who had them of old in Fact, had not that which truly constitutes the Title to that Ordinance. Compare *Luke* xiii. 26. with *Matth.* vii. 22. *Many shall say unto me in that Day, Have we not prophesied in thy Name? and in thy Name cast out Devils? and in thy Name done many wonderful Works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: Depart, etc.* So that in so far there may be an Error in that Representation, as the extraordinary Gifts of the Spirit are connected in our Thoughts, as a Reason for the Frequency of this Ordinance. But,

2^{dly}, If the Effusion of the Spirit meant at *Pentecost*, in the above Representation, be that which we call his more ordinary Influences (in the Use of which Expression, we will do well not to diminish, in our Thoughts, the Value of these his Works included in it as distinguished from the former, as in Truth they are the more valuable and important of the two, *Luke* x. 20;) as to such however, we would say, that as in every Respect, surely the Effusion of this Sort about the Time of *Pentecost* was very great, according to the Prophecy concerning Christ and that Time, *Psal.* cx. 1,—3. so probably, for the Numbers wrought upon by the Spirit, as well as the Degree of Consolation afforded then, such a remarkable Down-pouring, at one Place and Time, may not be again vouchsafed till Christ shall come, as so many Thousands were then converted, and Multitudes of them such as had *crucified the Lord of Glory*, or consented to that awful Deed, as well as rejected the Gospel in his Mouth.—Yet when this is granted,

if it were considered, that a like Effusion of the Holy Ghost for Power, *must be, and is*, in every Instance, of the thousand Times ten thousand, and thousand of thousands, who, in Virtue of the Oath of God annexed to the fore-mentioned Prophecy, *Psal. cx.* 4. are to be born again, comforted, and strengthened in the Ages to come, as was in the Called in and after *Pentecost*;— that this Effusion and Grace of the Spirit is to be in all Generations *expected*, in the Use of these very Means mentioned, *Acts ii. 42.* whereof the Supper is one;— that *actually this Grace of the Spirit hath been since dispensed* to vastly greater Numbers, if not to as high Degrees of Strength and Consolation, and that by these very Means, tho' at different Times, as was at the glorious Days of *Pentecost*;— that all the Work of the Spirit is *as needful* to the last as to the first Called;— *made sure to them too* by the same Word of Promise, while the Love and the Care of the merciful High-Priest for his own is not diminished, but is ever ready to be manifested, in a suitable, seasonable, and all-sufficient Supply to all their Wants, in the appointed and promised Way to the End, as it was at the Beginning.— If such Things, I say, were attended to, more Caution, I believe, would be used, in so magnifying the Down-pouring of the Spirit at any one Time, as to make the *Hands hang down, and the Knees feeble*, and to discourage any Christian in any Age of the Lord's Long-suffering, and preparing his Vessels of Mercy for Glory, from expecting any Measure of the Grace of the Spirit asked and needful. The Ground of this complaining Observation, then, about the greater Effusion of the Spirit of Grace at *Pentecost*, than is now to be expected, is not altogether so just, nor the Application of it, in the present Instance, so happy; for would not the Reasoning be exacter, and more scriptural, thus, “ That supposing once our “ Christianity, instead of abstaining from the habitual Use of any “ Mean of Grace, such as the Lord's Supper, because we have “ not Influences, or enlarged ones of the Spirit, we should rather, “ feeling the Want of these, be more punctual in the Attendance, “ where the needful, or desired Supplies are promised to be found?” Is not the Spirit of an opposite Language and Way, the Reverse of the just Reasoning of the Lepers, *2 Kings vii. 3, etc.* which is the more unreasonable in the present Instance, as it cannot be pretended, that there is less Ground of Expectation of the Spirit's Influences in one Age of Christianity than another, or that less Plenty is set before us now than at *Pentecost*, or that the Hand that distributes is now less liberal than at that Time; or that indeed there is, in any View, less Reason to expect Kindness from Christ, if we are found in a steadfast Continuance in all Duties, looking for it, as the first Christians were. Judge therefore how far

far the Observation ordinarily made about the Spirit's being more plentifully poured down at Pentecost, as a Reason for our not being as steadfast in the Use of the Means of Grace, as the first Christians were, is well made; or whether, indeed, in this Application of it, as an Apology for, if not a Cause of, infrequent Communion, and hindering thereby a constant Attendance upon an Ordinance, where a Remedy for the complained-of Want might be found, it be not rather criminal? But,

3dly, There is, I am afraid, another (undesigned) Fallacy in the Way of making this Objection, especially when offered to unlearned Multitudes; In as far, as by the Manner of Expression, "That there was an extraordinary Down-pouring of the Spirit at and after Pentecost, for frequent Communion, the Want of which hinders us from the like Practice," People are led to think that frequent Communicating was so connected with that extraordinary (in either Sense of the Word) Effusion of the Spirit, that the Practice of the one lasted no longer than the other; and that Christians, in after Ages, were some how loosed from the Obligations to continue steadfastly in the Ordinance of the Supper, when that extraordinary Influence ceased. But the World should be told, that long after all the Numbers converted at Pentecost were in their Graves, and long after all the Gifts of the Spirit ceased, did this Practice continue of Breaking Bread every first Day of the Week among Christians; even for four or five hundred Years after Christ, when there can be no Pretence for the extraordinary Effusion of the Spirit in any Sense, was this Duty steadfastly persevered in by the Lord's People, as well as Prayers or Doctrine. And let us consider, that, in the Text, *Acts* ii. 42. on which the present Argument turns, the Breaking of Bread stands in the Middle of these other Parts of the Worship of the Sabbath Day, which all acknowledge to be the constituent Parts of it. And how this comes to be picked out from the rest, and made extraordinary, is what I wish to see accounted for, the rather, when this Difference is said to flow from something about the Spirit's Influences, being varied now from what they were formerly, with regard to his fitting Christians for this Action. But where the Foundation of this from Scripture, the *only Rule of Faith and Manners*, is, I cannot see. Where is it said, that the Spirit is to abide for ever with Christians, to help their Infirmities in public Prayer and Doctrine, but more rarely in Breaking of Bread? Yet some such Word in Scripture one would think necessary, to justify the Distinction here supposed: But do you, Dear Sir, know such a Place in the whole New Testament, a Place that tells us, we may be instant in Prayer and Preaching, but not in the Lord's Supper; and that because of the

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Necessity of an extraordinary Effusion of the Spirit to the last, which some how is not so needful to the first? Or is it any where said, that the Spirit, with regard to the holy Supper, in the after Ages of Christianity, was only to descend, as the Angel at the Pool of Bethesda, at certain Times, to trouble the Waters, but ever to move them, as to Doctrine and Prayers?—Or if this Difference, as to Frequency in Communicating, and other Ordinances, is put on the Footing of the greater Danger of the Approach to God, in this than the rest. Though I would not, by any Means, lessen our Concern, or diminish the Danger of a rash Approach in that solemn Action; yet, as hereafter may appear, this Objection, in some Measure, belongs to Error, in not adverting to the Scripture about this Matter; such Ways of speaking seem, and, I believe, are intended to show Reverence to the Spirit; but let us beware, that, instead of honouring him by such voluntary Humility, we grieve him not by unworthy Thoughts: And least, under all this appearing Respect, our own Sloth,—or our own guilty staggering at Promises,—or our own secret Whispers of Unbelief, about the Lord's Goodness in giving, and the Spirit's in-coming, be not concealed: It becomes us surely to beware of all Suggestions, that but seem to derogate from the Grace and Promise of the Spirit,—whose Ministration is now,—who is now in the Lord's People abiding for ever, for their Help and Comfort; and that, by the Means of all Ordinances appointed to convey his Influences to them, and particularly by the Lord's Supper, and a constant Attendance upon it as well as others, as the Command and the Promise is at least equal towards it as the rest. So much for this Objection.

I stay not now to insist on what I find a Question among the Learned in Antiquity, to wit, Not whether the Lord's Supper was not constantly used by Christians for a considerable Time after Christ rose from the Dead, as a standing Part of Worship in their Assemblies on the Sabbath Day, as well as Prayer and Praise; for this, in Antiquity, and among all that know it, is undisputed.—But whether the principal, if not the only Time of the Church's Prayers and Praises, was not before and after the Celebration of the Sacraments of Baptism or the Lord's Supper? Not to enter deeply into this Question just now, I say, nor to be positive about the Affirmative of it, if you can suppose that any Way it comes near the Truth, how indefensible does it appear, while we preserve the daily Prayers and Praises, to neglect that wherewith they are both so greatly connected, beautified, and enlivened: On this, if on any Occasion, might it not be said, *These ought you to have done, and not to have left the other undone, and, what God hath joined you ought not to have put asunder?*

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From all that hath been said, then, now and formerly, from the Scripture, is it not clear, that Breaking of Bread was no more connected with the extraordinary Down-pouring of the Spirit, at the first Preaching of the Gospel, than Prayers or Doctrine?—That the Christians, then, who had what we call the ordinary Influence of the Holy Ghost, were as frequently engaged in their Assemblies, in the one, as in the other Means of Grace,—and as frequently as the Apostles and others, who had these extraordinary Gifts;—that the Grace of the Spirit is necessary to all the Means of Salvation;—and that if for any Thing belonging to the Spirit's Influence, it is thought proper to be less frequent in the Lord's Supper than the rest, the Foundation for that Distinction is called for, and should appear, not from our Reasonings, but from some Passage of the holy Scripture making it, and shewing, that the shedding it abroad in the Hearts of the Lord's People, is less sparingly, or rarely to be expected in this Ordinance, than the rest of the Means of Grace; but this is what, I dare say, none will undertake to show. And what, upon the Whole, then, is the Conclusion of the Scripture upon this Subject, but, “ That the Lord's Supper was not intended to be, nor was, in Fact, used as an extraordinary Institution of Christianity, but was the ordinary and distinguished Work of Christians, from the Beginning, upon every first Day of the Week ?”

Having then so far considered this Point, as it appears from the Scriptures, suffer me to proceed to some other Things, which may give further Light to it: And though I will join with you in thinking, that whoever goes off from the sure Foundation of the Scriptures, to that *mare magnum* of the Dreams of the Fathers, is in a Way of being led both into very great Follies and Errors; yet their Usefulness is agreed to by all, in testifying concerning antient Facts, and illustrating Usages which are pointed at in the Scriptures: And as from the express Testimony of the Scripture, in the Instances of *Troas* and *Corinth*, it hath already appeared, that the Supper was in the Possession of the Churches twenty-five Years at least after its Institution, every Lord's Day; so the more we look into the Records of Christian Antiquity, and that for many Ages after Christ, the more shall we be confirmed from the Universality and Constancy of all Churches in that same Practice, that this Frequency must have had a divine Original among them. It is proper here indeed to observe, as a very learned Person, speaking on another Subject, but alluding to this, justly doth, “ That the Writers of the first Ages are very few; and settled well received Practices do not need to be so much spoken of, or argued: Thus we have fewer Exhortations to frequent Communion in the most
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" ancient Times, when it was universally practised, than we have
 " in the fourth and fifth Centuries, when Christians failed in that
 " Duty, and many used to communicate only on the great Holi-
 " days, and some would stay at the Administration without
 " communicating, a Custom which *Cyril* does sometimes
 " severely enveigh against." Now, though this Observation be
 just and true, yet there are not wanting Passages in the earliest
 Writers, which most fairly and easily are understood, when ex-
 plained, as having their Reference to an ordinary and daily Ad-
 ministration of the Lord's Supper among Christians; some such
 may be observed in *Clement Romanus*, and more in *Ignatius*: Di-
 recter Testimonies indeed are to be expected in Controversies,
 Apologies, and from such Incidents as brought the Customs of
 Churches to be more particularly described: But instead of
 bringing together all that might enlighten this Subject, which
 is truly an incontroverted one, keeping my Intention in View,
 which is to beget a Conviction, even from such Testimonies,
 that this is a scriptural Institution, that Christians should every
 Lord's Day eat the Lord's Supper, I shall rather gather the Evi-
 dence for it, from as different Countries and Ages as I can; in
 that View, the Argument, as belonging to a Fact, and a Pra-
 ctice derived from the Apostles, being evidently strengthened.

From *Pontus* and *Bithynia* then shall be the first Evidence:
 There we know, by the Address of *Peter's* first Epistle, written
Anno 60, that there were many scattered Christians, who had so
 continued and so spread, that in *Trajan's* Time, as we learn from
 other History, these Countries were reckoned the greatest Seat
 of Christians in the whole Empire. In so flourishing a Situation
 then, we cannot suppose they either lost or altered the apostolic
 Practices about their Worship, more than any Church in the
 World, during the short Interval of scarce 50 Years, between
Peter's writing to them, and *Pliny's* (*Anno* 110) giving his Lord
 the remarkable Account of them, Ep. 97. *ad Traj.* which, a-
 mong other Things, says; " They were wont, on a stated Day,
 " to meet, and alternately sing Hymns together to Christ as God,
 " and to bind themselves by a Sacrament," etc. And this Ac-
 count, evidently relating to the Lord's Supper's being every Sab-
 bath (for that is doubtless the stated Day) among the Christians,
 is the more to be depended on, as coming from a Hand, though
 foreign to Christianity, yet greatly qualified to give a just Ac-
 count of the Practices of those who professed it, being naturally
 an enquiring and great Man;—by his Place as Governor, having
 Power and Influence to receive Intelligence,—and by the Jeal-
 ousy his Master had, of that Part of his Subjects, stirred up to
 exert himself, in procuring the exactest Accounts of them: We

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may depend on it therefore as a true Account, and that not of a particular Church, but of the whole Sect, as far as he could learn it.

Let us next travel to *Samaria*, and 40 Years afterwards, *Anno 155*, we shall find *Justin Martyr*, that Friend to Christianity, bearing the same Testimony to this Practice, as its Enemy had done before; for he says expressly, *Apol. 2.* "That on *Sunday* the Christians assembled, the Scriptures were read, the President exhorted, all joined in Prayer, which being ended, the Elements were brought forth, then the President (*by no common Prayer, but*) according to his Ability blessed, the People saying, *Amen*, and then what was consecrated was given to every one present," etc.

If we next go round to *Afric*, we shall find *Tertullian*, *Anno 200*, and 50 Years afterwards, *Cyprian*, in the same Place, no less explicite in their Declarations about this Matter; I cite not the particular Passages, for by turning to Chancellor *King* on the Church, you will see Abundance of them.

If we cross the *Mediterranean*, we shall find in *Spain*, *Jerom*, *Anno 390*, declaring this Practice was kept up there, as *Minutius Felix* at *Rome*, in the third Century, mentions the Christians in his Time assembling, and eating on a solemn Day, "*Ad epulas solenni die coeunt*," says he.

And when we follow Christianity further, penetrating into *Germany*, you will see in Dr. *Cave's Hist. Lit. Victorinus* in *Hungary*, *Anno 290*, representing the Manners of Christians on the Lord's Day, thus,—"*Die Dominico, cum gratiarum actione, ad panem exeamus!*"

In the fifth Century, *Chrysostom*, at *Constantinople*, speaks of this Matter in the strongest Manner; I point not out the Passages, because they will be mentioned in some After-Citations.

Augustin again in the same Age, in another Part of the World, is no less positive about this Matter of Fact; I pretend not Acquaintance with his Writings, but in an Abridgement of the whole of them, by the Jesuit *Torrensis*, in his *Confessio August.* I observe a Multitude of Expressions to this Purpose: He cites, for Example, *Tom. 10. De Verb. Dom. Serm. 28.* "*Si quotidianus est panis*, etc. If this be daily Bread, why dost thou receive it once a Year as the *Greeks* and the *East* are wont to do? Who is not worthy to receive it daily, is not worthy to receive it once a Year: And *Tom. 3. De Eccl. Dogm. Cap. 53.* daily to receive the Lord's Supper I neither applaud nor censure, but I persuade and exhort to communicate every Lord's Day." I cannot tell how much Sense and History might be transcribed out of this Book to the same Purpose.

Here then is the united Voice, you see, of very distant Times and Places for this Fact, that Christians did communicate at least every Lord's Day, for 4 or 500 Years after Christ: None opposed the Practice. And when, in the fifth Century, some neglected it, that Neglect flowed not from Judgment or Opinion that it should be so, but from guilty Sloth: The Universality of the Practice, as is shewn above, makes it manifest in the strongest Point of Light, that wherever the Gospel came, this came with it as a Part of the Commandments of Christ; for this is not, as some other Things are, where this Argument of Universality is weakly or falsely applied, and therefore justly fails. It is not here as with many *Popish* Errors, about which there is no Testimony in Antiquity, for this good Reason, that then they existed not, and in whose Favours therefore the *Roman Catholics* fallaciously plead this Silence as an Argument: For this is a Fact concerning which, from the Beginning, there are the most positive Testimonies: Nor is this like some other Things which crept in, under Scripture Colours, insensibly, till by Alterations, tho' the Scripture Names were preserved, yet the Thing was lost; for this is the identical Thing which was from the Beginning, and about which all Sorts of Men agree; even the *Papists* acknowledge it, notwithstanding their Inconsistencies with it, in their solitary *Masses*, and divided Sacrament; in particular, the impartial *Dupin*, writing on the first Centuries, says expressly, that the Believers received the Eucharist very often, commonly as often as they met together.

The very Superstitions of the Christians, in the third, fourth, and fifth Centuries, when, in many Things, they were turned away from the Simplicity that is in Christ, shew how established the Practice of Communicating very often was among them; some of them you will find collected in *Leideker, De Statu Eccl. Afric. §. 5. "Liberum quoque, etc.* It was allowed also to carry home Part of the eucharistical Bread after Communicating. "—The Faithful take some of it before all Food.—It was preserved by some of them at home in a Chest: This Custom seems to have arisen from Persecution, because of which they could not celebrate the Eucharist in their ordinary Meetings, but lest the Believers should want the Comfort which they might receive from the Use of the Sacrament, in such Difficulties, it was permitted, that the Godly should carry home the eucharistical Bread, that thereby they might arm themselves against the Weight of Persecution. *Lege L'Arroque de Coena, p. 1. cap. 15.* where he treats of the Custom of carrying the Bread to the sick and absent.—To the dying the Sacrament was given; and, as is added, thro' Superstition, it hap-

" happened, that the sacramental Bread was sometimes put into
 " the Mouth of the dying, and was buried with them, which
 " was condemned by the *Carthaginian* Bishops, in their Coun-
 " cil." Thus far *Leideker*.

All this shews, that however much the first Christians revered
 this Ordinance, and in some Instances in the latter Ages abused
 it, yet it certainly was what they were all much accustomed to,
 and what they could not be, for any Time, without.

Nay more, not only the Superstitions of these latter Ages
 (4th and 5th) but even the Forgeries too, wherewith they so
 much abounded, shew the Certainty of this, that the first Christi-
 ans were habitual in the Practice of breaking Bread every Sab-
 bath Day : In a little we shall find Bishop *Burnet* making a just
 Reference to that spurious Book, *The apostolic Constitutions*, where
 a minute Description is given of the Christian Worship, and of
 eating the Lord's Supper as a constant Part of it, and this Part
 of the Account so corresponds with truer and older Authors,
 that were it needful, even a Confirmation of this as an usual
 Practice among Christians might be drawn from hence :— For it
 does not altogether destroy the Veracity of this Particular, that
 the Author was an Impostor ; as such must preserve some Truth,
 to help away their Lies, as, were you to look into this very
 Thing, you would find the Author has indeed no Lack ; nor
 does the Latches of the Forgery (if we suppose, with many, this
 to have been the Work of the fourth Century, if not later) di-
 minish, but rather add to our present Argument, as it would
 shew how long this Practice of the Churches of Christ, fairly de-
 rived from the Apostles, kept its footing in them.

Consider then Antiquity in what View you please, the elder
 or the later Accounts ;— consider it among Enemies or Friends ;
 — View it in its Truth or in its Lies ;— in its Simplicity or in
 its Superstitions ;— consider all the Accounts, which all Sorts of
 Men have given, take the Evidence from as distant Corners of
 the World, and as opposite Characters in it as you please,
 from these who have no Bias, but to the Truth, or from such
 whose Opinions and Interests would lead them to give this Fact
 a Colour if it could bear it, and all with one Voice shall declare,
 That to come together on the first Day of the Week to break
 Bread, was, from the Beginning, and for many Ages, the Custom,
 the uninterrupted, unquestioned, undisputed Practice of all Christi-
 an Churches :— As much so, as it was their Practice to sanctify
 the Lord's Day, or to pray, praise, and preach the Apostles
 Doctrine upon it ;— that as this was the most distinguishing Part
 of their Worship, so was it what they and their Worship was de-
 scribed by (*Pliny's* Letter ;) and the Action by which, among
 them.

themselves, the Lord's Day was known (*dies panis*;) what consequently they would least and last of all have omitted, while any Degree of the Purity of the Gospel remained among them. How strongly then does all this place this Matter before us? how clearly does this appear as the Light from the Scripture? And when all Antiquity reflects it too, in so direct a Manner to us, what can we do, but confess it as a Part of the Truth coming from Christ, that it is his Will, and our Duty to *continue steadfastly in the breaking of Bread, often doing this in Remembrance of him?*

If you next enquire, as I own it is most natural you should, how this usual distinguishing Part of Christian Worship became to be accounted extraordinary? How this Ordinance, which was every where administered at least every Lord's Day, came afterwards to be so much neglected, nay, that Neglect too reckoned by many a Reverence toward it and its Author? — Instead of attempting to satisfy you, concerning this surprizing Change, by any little Acquaintance of my own with Church History, I chuse, as a better Way, to recite two Passages, one from an Episcopal, another from a Presbyterian, Church Historian, who, as they agree much together in their Account of this Matter, I believe, verily have given the true one. —

And, first, let us hear Bishop *Burnet*, on the thirty-first Article of the Church of *England*, intitled, *Of the one Oblation of Christ finished on the Cross*. “ Their Worship (*i. e.* of the first Christians) he says there, concluded always with the Eucharist; such “ as were not capable of it, as the Catechumens, and those who “ were doing public Penance for their Sins, assisted at the more “ general Parts of the Worship, and so much of it was called “ their Mass, because they were dismissed at the Conclusion of “ it; when that was done, then the Faithful staid and did partake of the Eucharist.” And again; “ And tho’ this seems to “ be a Practice begun in the third Century, yet, both from *Justin Martyr* and *Tertullian*, it is evident, that all the Faithful did “ constantly communicate: There is a Canon, among those “ which go under the Name of the Apostles, against such as came “ and assisted in other Parts of the Service, and did not partake “ of the Eucharist; the same Thing was decreed by the Council of “ *Antioch*; and it appears by the Constitutions, that a Deacon “ was appointed to see that no Man should go out, and a Sub- “ Deacon was to see that no Woman should, during the Oblation: The Fathers do frequently allude to the Word *Communion*, to shew, that the Sacrament was to be common to all: “ It is true, in *St. Chrysostom*’s Time, the Zeal that the Christians of the former Ages had to communicate often began to “ slacken,

“ slacken, so that they had thin Communion, and few Communicants; against which that Father raises himself with his pathetic Eloquence, in Words which do shew, that he had no Notion of solitary Masses, or of the Lawfulness of them; and it is very evident, that the Neglect of the Sacrament in those who come not to it, and the Profanation of it by those who come unworthily, both which grew very scandalous at that Time, led that holy and zealous Bishop to many eloquent and sublime Strains concerning it, which cannot be understood without making these Abatements that are due to a copious and Asiatic Stile, when much inflamed by Devotion.”

The other Passage I refer to, you will find in Mr. *Petrie's* Church History, who, with no less Learning and Clearness, in his Cent. ix. p. 138. gives the following Account of this Matter.—“ Then of the Gifts of the People, *Cassander in Liturg. cap. 27.* hath these Words from *Expositio Ordinis Romani*, all the People coming into the Church should sacrifice; and *Ex Decretis Fabiani*, We ordain, that on every Lord's Day, the Oblation of the Altar be made by all the Men and Women both of Bread and Wine.— They were at first wont to communicate daily; *Cyprian de Orat. Dominica*, at the fourth Petition, saith, We receive the Eucharist daily. On these Words *Pamelius* hath marked, that the same continued at *Rome* and in *Spain* till the Days of *Jerom*, 390; and at *Milan*, till *Ambrose*, 370; but had failed sooner in the *East* Church.— *Augustin*, in his 118 Epistle, sheweth the different Customs of Communicating, in some Places oftener, and in other Places more seldom. It may be thought, that when Christians had Place, Zeal did decrease, and the People did not communicate so oft, and so the Offerings were the fewer; then the Fathers did complain of the Rarity of the Communicants, and exhorted the People to communicate every Lord's Day, and did absolutely inveigh against their Rarity as absurd and zealous; and said, that when they came, it was not for the Thirst of Grace, or Remorse of Sin, but for Solemnity. *Chrysostom*, on 1 Cor. xi. Hom. 28.— These Exhortations and Reproofs prevailed not, therefore an Act was made, binding the People to communicate each Lord's Day. *Gratian de Consecrat. 2. cap. Quotidie*, etc.— Neither was this obeyed, therefore was another made, that they should communicate thrice yearly; at the Feast of Christ's Nativity, Resurrection, and the *Pentecost*. *Ibid.* For all this the People would not communicate so oft, therefore a Law was made, that all the People should communicate at *Pasch*, and then daily Communion was forgot among the People: When the Priests saw that Laws would not move the

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" People to communicate oft, and bring their Offerings, they devised another damnable Means; they taught the People, that the Lord's Supper is not only a Sacrament, and so profitable to them only, but it is a Sacrifice to God, and profitable to all the Beholders of it; and, by their Offerings, they may find Mercy and Grace; yea, *lastly*, not to the Offerers and Beholders only, but to all for whom the Priest offereth it, as well absent as present, whether alive or dead, and at last both to the Soul and all other Necessities, *etc. etc. etc.*"

After reading the distinct Accounts of these two Historians, we cannot be at a Loss in forming a just Conception of the unhappy Alteration of the Manner of the Kingdom, the Commandment and Worship of our Lord, in this Matter of his Supper.

To the Neglect of the Sacrament in those who came not to it, and the Prophanation of it by these who came unworthily, (both which in the fifth Century grew scandalous) is this ascribed by Bishop Burnet. " And when the Christians had Place, says *Petrie*, " Zeal did decrease, and the People did not communicate so oft, " and so the Offerings were the fewer." It was then some of the best of the Fathers, conscious of the Falling-away from the Spirit, and first Practice of Christians, declaimed, as became them, with great Zeal on this Subject, while others, to recover that Reverence, the Want of which, their own Admission of the Unworthy to this Ordinance, (with too much Regard probably to the Offering) had been one Occasion, fell, you see, upon many unhappy Inventions to effect it, till, at last, indeed, they landed in a dreadful Equivalent; most antichristianly, they first make Acts to force Men to this Action, in Opposition to the whole Law and Spirit of the Gospel, by which all the People must be willing;—that failing, (and truly when the Authority of Christ was ineffectual, they, if they had not been blinded, might soon have discerned their own would not prevail) they go from Evil to worse, change the Ordinances of Christ, by robbing what was due from every Sabbath, and exalting their own uncommanded Days with it, and *Pasch* above all, as that peculiarly was the Day of their Pride, till daily Communion was forgot altogether; after which, by wide Steps, they arrived at the Height of Apostasy and Abomination.

All Antiquity informs us, that the first Christians were wont on the Lord's Day to contribute of their Substance, which served three Purposes, namely, the defraying the Charge of the Elements in the Sacrament,—the supporting the Poor,—and those who served them at the Altar; this was called their Oblation and Sacrifice; Expressions, when applied to such Offerings, according to *Heb. xiii. 16.* and with Relation to Jesus Christ, the great High-priest,

very

very justifiable; but, without such Relation, wholly absurd, and derogatory to Christ. The true and full View of this Matter, (so much abused since, and by many in our own Country too) among other Treaties, may be seen in *Mede's Christian Sacrifice*, or in two large and later Dissertations of *Pfaffius Prof. Tubing. de Oblat. et Consecrat. Veterum Euchar.* wherein are several Things not ordinarily known on this Subject of the Lord's Supper.—It is easy, however, to conceive, when, in the antient Apostasy of the Church, Christians attended not as formerly on daily Communion, nor gave their Oblation; how the Priests, who were not behind others in the Backsliding, and to whom so large a Share of the Offerings came, would be anxious, for that Reason, in pressing an Attendance, allowing any Sort of Admission; and, indeed, the laying Hold of the Opportunity, which prevailing Ignorance gave, to change the Meaning of the Words, Oblation and Sacrifice, in the Manner done, was certainly one of the deepest Contrivances of Antichrist; for, instead of the Gifts themselves, Christ was made the Sacrifice and the Oblation:—Instead of the People, the Priests became the Offerers to God, and the Church's Prayers, for Blessing on the Sacrament, became their Consecration.—And hence a Fountain of Treasure unhallowed, inexhaustible; for, as *Petrie* observes, on this Doctrine were multiplied the Riches of the Church by Donations of Prebendaries, Chanteries, *etc. etc.* as is to be seen in their Charters: I offer,—for the Remission of mine, and my Parents Sins, to maintain the Service of God in Sacrifices, and Masses, *etc. etc.*

And pardon me here, Dear Sir, if you think what I shall now add, in any Respect, a Digression from the present Argument; for, on the mentioning this Apostasy, and the Progress of it, I cannot but call to your Remembrance, how, long before this Period, the Churches of *Rome* and *Asia* had been severally positive about their Traditions from *John* and *Peter*, two Apostles of the Circumcision, concerning the precise Day whereon *Pasch* should be observed; in itself, a *Jewish* Feast, and for the *Christian Jews*, therefore, for a Season, lawful to be kept, but which the *Gentile Christians*, you know, by that Decree which seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to the Apostles to make, Acts xv. had no Concern in, in which Freedom also they were afterwards confirmed by their own Apostle, in many of his Epistles; on this unscriptural Dispute, however, did that presumptuous Man *Victor*, at the Head of the *Roman* Church, excommunicate the whole *Christian* Souls in *Asia*, for their unyielding Obstinacy to the *Roman* Day;—so fulfilling, in Part, our Lord's own melancholy Prospect, in coming to send Fire on the Earth, Luke xii.—and, in Part, also the awful Prediction about Antichrist, and that Myltery of Iniquity, which, in *Paul's* Time, was already work-

“ People to communicate oft, and bring their Offerings, they devised another damnable Means ; they taught the People, that the Lord’s Supper is not only a Sacrament, and so profitable to them only, but it is a Sacrifice to God, and profitable to all the Beholders of it; and, by their Offerings, they may find Mercy and Grace; yea, *lastly*, not to the Offerers and Beholders only, but to all for whom the Priest offereth it, as well absent as present, whether alive or dead, and at last both to the Soul and all other Necessities, *etc. etc. etc.*”

After reading the distinct Accounts of these two Historians, we cannot be at a Loss in forming a just Conception of the unhappy Alteration of the Manner of the Kingdom, the Commandment and Worship of our Lord, in this Matter of his Supper.

To the Neglect of the Sacrament in those who came not to it, and the Prophanation of it by these who came unworthily, (both which in the fifth Century grew scandalous) is this ascribed by Bishop Burnet. “ And when the Christians had Place, says *Petrie*, “ Zeal did decrease, and the People did not communicate so oft, and so the Offerings were the fewer.” It was then some of the best of the Fathers, conscious of the Falling-away from the Spirit, and first Practice of Christians, declaimed, as became them, with great Zeal on this Subject, while others, to recover that Reverence, the Want of which, their own Admission of the Unworthy to this Ordinance, (with too much Regard probably to the Offering) had been one Occasion, fell, you see, upon many unhappy Inventions to effect it, till, at last, indeed, they landed in a dreadful Equivalent; most antichristianly, they first make Acts to force Men to this Action, in Opposition to the whole Law and Spirit of the Gospel, by which all the People must be willing;—that failing, (and truly when the Authority of Christ was ineffectual, they, if they had not been blinded, might soon have discerned their own would not prevail) they go from Evil to worse, change the Ordinances of Christ, by robbing what was due from every Sabbath, and exalting their own uncommanded Days with it, and *Pasch* above all, as that peculiarly was the Day of their Pride, till daily Communion was forgot altogether; after which, by wide Steps, they arrived at the Height of Apostasy and Abomination.

All Antiquity informs us, that the first Christians were wont on the Lord’s Day to contribute of their Substance, which served three Purposes, namely, the defraying the Charge of the Elements in the Sacrament,—the supporting the Poor,—and those who served them at the Altar; this was called their Oblation and Sacrifice; Expressions, when applied to such Offerings, according to *Heb. xiii. 16.* and with Relation to Jesus Christ, the great High-priest,

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working in the Pride of Men, 2 *Theff.* ii. 4. *For in what Instance hath the Man of Sin exalted himself?—when hath he sat in the Temple of God, or shewed himself that he is God, if not on this Occasion? when so many thousand Souls, upon no Foundation from God, or his Word, (as a Difference about an unscriptural Day could never have a Ground from God or the Scripture for such a Sentence) were judged to be separated from Christ, and therefore perished.—As the native Fruit of this, and the working of Pride in so high an Opposition, the succeeding Bishops of Rome became more and more positive about their extraordinary Days, and particularly about their Pasch, hence forward made by them, no less an Idol than that Heathen Goddess Easter (by whose Name that Day is now distinguished with us) was of old among her Adorers; to this Day, therefore, Baptisms * must bring their Honour: And when abounding Iniquity, cold Love, and unworthy Admissions, had brought the Lord's Supper very low, to this Rock of Offence (Pasch) must this holy Institution also bring all its remaining Glory:—Thence dreadful Consequences indeed!—even all Deceiveableness of Unrighteousness; for what have we from this Time, and this Step of Apostasy, but growing Abominations?—After this, private Masses, instead of the Communions of the Lord's People. After this, innumerable Heaven-daring Sacrifices, instead of the Once-Offering of Christ to God for us.—And a Multitude of Priests to make them, instead of the only High One, appearing in the Presence of God for his People.—After this, intire Ignorance of the Institution and Design of the Lord's Supper;—the Removal of its Comfort in the Fellowship of Christ's People with him their Head, and with one another therein.—The whole Ordinance is changed, the Glory of the Lord himself too into a Loaf or a Wafer, or into every Particle of them to all their countless Divisibility. While Men fall down and worship the Idol.—Nay, hence also the Blasphemy of saying it is in the Power of every guilty Priest; by muttering Words which many of them understand not, to make the Change,—thus making Merchandize of Souls, bartering Pardon, Heaven, and the Enjoyment of God for Money; not in this Life either only, but even after Souls have stood before the Judgment-Seat, while the Son of God is he that is valued, and oftner or seldomer given out in Sale, as the Pieces of Silver are multiplied.—But there is neither End nor Measure of the Abominations; *The Blind lead the Blind, and many fall into the Ditch.**

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* Dupin says the council of Gironne, in the sixth century, reserved the administration of infants to Easter and Pentecost; and further, that, in the ninth century, this was fully in practice.

Suffer me, then, from all this, to observe to you, that, as these awful Events can neither surprize, nor stumble us at Christianity itself, the Spirit which was in Christ, and in his Apostles, every where witnessing, and fortelling that such Things were to be in the last Days; so they ought to put a final End to all hearkening to unwritten Traditions, or adding to what is written, as we clearly see how that Sort of Departure from God, in the Instance of hallowing unscriptural Days, was so fitted, in his holy Judgment, for the after and greater Apostasies of his Church: *Therefore thus saith the Lord, behold, I lay stumbling Blocks before this People, and the Fathers and the Sons together shall fall upon them; the Neighbour and his Friend shall perish; and because Ephraim hath made many Altars for Sin, Altars shall be unto him to sin.* Such Instances of the holy over-ruling of God in his Judgments, for the Punishment of Sin in his Church, so abound in the Old Testament; and that Church, in this very View, is so explicately set before us, in Rom. xi. and Hebrews iii. penult. as an Example, causing us to fear, that I cannot forbear transcribing a Passage or two more (among many) to the same Purpose. *Stay yourselves, and wonder; cry you out, and cry, they are drunken, but not with Wine; they stagger, but not with strong Drink; for the Lord hath poured out upon you the Spirit of deep Sleep, and hath closed your Eyes; the Prophets, and the Rulers, and the Seers, hath he covered, and the Vision of all is become unto you as a Book that is sealed, etc. Wherefore the Lord said, For as much as this People draw near to me with their Mouth, and with their Lips do honour me, and have removed their Heart far from me, and their Fear towards me is taught by the Precepts of Men; therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous Work among this People, even a marvellous Work, and a Wonder; for the Wisdom of their wise Men shall perish,—and the Understanding of their prudent Men shall be hid, etc.—And for this Cause God shall send them strong Delusions, that they should believe a Lie, etc. etc.* Let us cease, then, from wondering, that it so beset the Christian Church in their Apostasy, as is represented above; let us rather, as becometh, always fear, lest we also should err in heart, in departing from the living God, and thereby be exposed to some dreadful spiritual Judgment, and be allowed also to perish from the Way.

As I need not inform you, how remote my Thoughts are from imputing the least of these, or such like Designs, as appeared in the Roman Church, to the Intentions of those, who among us are most contented or pleased with our Method of dispensing the Lord's Supper; so should it be observed, that it were hard, if not impossible, to prove, that formed Intentions were among the Ministers of the antient Church, in the gradual Steps of their Apostasy,

stasy, still to rise higher in it. Many good Men, no doubt, were in every Age, lamenting declining Truth, and its Influence, and growing Superstition,—the Progress of the Departure from the Scriptures, from the Truth, and from Christ, and doing what they could to make Things better; for, when a Consumption is determined, when even *Wrath to the uttermost comes*, it comes not all at once; *the Blindness at first happens but in Part to Israel*;—so, notwithstanding of the Distance of our Thoughts from the Intention of Apostasy from Christ, by our Method in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper; yet, to express it in as inoffensive a Way as possible, ours is certainly not the first and antient Method of dispensing that Ordinance; nor is it a Circumstance, surely, that is fit to give us Comfort, but rather to alarm us, to think, that a Deviation from the original Institution of it, less remarkable as to the Frequency, than ours is, was one of the Doors by which the great Corruptions of Antichrist entered.—Nay, more, if like Causes produce, though not the same, yet, like Effects, can our Prospects be pleasant? If we again remember the State of the Churches of Christ, with respect to this Matter, (as represented by *Burnet*) when entering on the grand Apostasy, the Neglect of the Sacrament by those who came not to it, and the Profanation of it by those that came unworthily, both which grew scandalous at that Time: And then think of our own Situation:—And then reflect on the Holiness of an unchangeable God,—who, in his righteous Judgment, allowed the former Apostasy to go on by Superstition, corresponding to the State of Darkness then, and may now suffer it to appear in open Infidelity, as the natural, but awful, Judgment, for despised and hated Light, that his Judgments may be manifest.—This Prospect is melancholy: Oh! that we could say it were far off.—Let us, for the present, however, return to our Subject.

For it is Time, after having seen how the Churches of Christ fell from its first happy Practice of eating the Lord's Supper every Lord's Day, to inquire, when, in the Mercy of God, about two Ages ago, he made the Light to shine,——and the Captivity to be restored from the Antichristian Egypt, above described; what Light, or Attainments were vouchsafed the reformed Churches, or these honoured Men, who, as *He-goats*, went before them, in this Matter of the Lord's Supper?

But here it is proper to observe, that it does not follow, as a necessary Consequence, because, at the Time of our happy Reformation, God made Light to arise;——that therefore, to all Points, and to all Degrees, the Light must shine; were not this a much juster Expectation, according to the Analogy of the Works of God, that, as in Love and Wisdom, he makes not the Noon-Day to burst

burst forth at once from Night and Darkness upon Man, but causes the Shadows of the Morning, the Breakings of the Day, to precede the bright Shining;—and, as in former Ages of the World, and former Dispensations of his Grace; after the same Manner he so also conducted the Light of Salvation;—that now, ~~was~~ at the coming of the Glory of the latter Days, he would not, all at once, reveal it:—That therefore, though this, or any other Truth or Practice belonging to Christ, or his Church, was not discovered or brought to its Perfection with the Reformers; yet it follows not, "There are no such Things;" and that it is consistent with all the Respect due to the Reformation, to go further whenever it appears agreeable to the Will of Christ to do so.

The Truth is, when we look into what happened, as to the Lord's Supper at the Reformation, it must be observed, that as one great Thing reformed from, was that Abomination of the Mass, whose most spurious Production from the pure Ordinance of Christ has been considered, it might well be expected, that the Reformers would particularly search into its Foundation; and that, consequently, in clearing away the Rubbish, they would discover the true Institution of Christ concerning this Sacrament. It was so, and God led them fully to the Truth; but ah! that we must ever lament, they did not act in full Conformity to it, and oblige us to make so unhappy a Distinction between their Knowledge and their Practice, giving us thereby too full an Occasion (if we would make Use of it agreeably to the former Observation) of going beyond them in this material Point of Reformation.

Let us then examine, first, what their Light and Sense in this Matter was? And, then, what their Practice? As to the first, That it was according to the very Truth; and that they could scarcely speak with any Temper about an unfrequent Administration, will appear from the following Instances: And, first, let me pray your Attention to that eminent Man, Mr. *Calvin*, while he thus expresses himself on this Subject, *Inst. lib. 4. cap. 17. §. 44, 45, 46.* "*Quæ de Sacramento, &c.* What I have already discoursed concerning this Sacrament, abundantly shews, that it was not for this End appointed, that once yearly, and that in a careless Manner (as the common Custom at present is) it should be received by Christians, but that it should be frequently used by them all, that they may often call to Mind the Sufferings of Christ; and, by that Remembrance, strengthen their Faith, and animate themselves to sing the Praises of God, and celebrate his Goodness; and, in fine, thereby cultivate mutual Love, and thus express it to one another, the Bond of which they have beheld in the Union of the Body of Christ."—And then

having shewn from the Scriptures, " That, according to Apostolic Practice, the Church never assembled together without *Doctrine*, " *Prayers*, the *Supper*, and *Alms*," He tells us, " That this Practice continued many Ages; and, to prove this, cites the " antient Canons, ascribed to *Anacletus* and *Calixtus*,—the Apostolic Canons,—and the Decrees of the Councils of *Antioch* and " *Toledo*, which ordered such as come to Church, and hear Sermon, and yet abstain from the Communion, should be admonished; and if, after Admonition, they shall abstain, that they should be excommunicated. By these Rules, continues he, in " §. 45. Good Men would retain the Practice of frequent Communion, delivered down from the Apostles themselves, which, " though extremely profitable, they observed, by Degrees, growing out of Use. And then he goes on to prove the Frequency " of the Lord's Supper, in the Times of *Chrysostom* and *Augustin*, " by several strong Passages from their Writings, wherein they " complain, in the severest Language, of the growing Remissness " in that Matter, lest they should seem to wink at that guilty Sloth.—Nay, in §. 46. he carries the Matter higher, when he " says, *Et sane haec consuetudo*, &c. And truly this Custom, of " appointing Men to communicate once yearly, is, without all " Doubt, a Contrivance of the Devil, whoever was the Instrument " of introducing it; and, in the Margin, it is said, that *Papish* " Custom, commanding the Communicating once yearly, is an " execrable Invention."

Take one Evidence more, to put the Point of the Reformers Light of this Matter out of Question, from the Discipline of the Church of *France*, Can. 14. which runs thus, " Although it hath " not been the Custom to administer the Lord's Supper in the " greatest Part of our Churches more than four Times a-Year; " yet it were to be desired, that it might be oftener; so that the " Reverence which is needful for this holy Sacrament could be " kept up and observed, because it is most profitable for the " Children of God to be exercised, and grow in Faith, by the frequent Use of the Sacraments, and the Example of the Primitive " Church doth invite us to it; and therefore our national Synods " shall take that Care and Order in this Matter, as is requisite for " the Weal and Happiness of our Churches." This Evidence, you see, is also full concerning the Views the Church of *France* had of the Duty of frequent Communicating, as appears (besides other Passages of this Canon) by the Declaration of their Knowledge, and evident Approbation of the Example of the Primitive Church; what that was we have seen; and that they were not mistaken about it we may believe, when we reflect, that *Rivetus*, *Calvin's* own Colleague, *Beza*, and a Multitude of Men of that Size in

Learn.

Learning, were Presidents and Members of these Synods that formed that Work.— Nor indeed could the Matter be hid from any reformed Church, each of them had so many learned Eyes prying into Antiquity, where this Point is incontestd and clear, all which they were more narrowly led to search into, as it belonged to a Question they were so anxious and in a perpetual Struggle about, namely, their Contests with the Papists concerning the Mass.

So far then we see, that the Knowledge the Reformers had of this Matter was agreeable to the Truth; let us next consider their Practice: But here, alas! was the Short-coming; and here the too just Opportunity given to others to proceed many Steps beyond them; for altho' it may be indecent and rash to condemn these great Men, who, in Providence, had the Direction of the Reformation, for not conforming fully to the Intention of the Lord, and their own Sentiments about this Ordinance, as they might have Difficulties, not so easy to overcome (even as we now find it difficult to bring Things back to that imperfect Example they gave us, though, besides the higher Argument from Scripture and Antiquity, we have their Authority and Practice also, to which many profess so much Regard, to enforce it;) yet who can abstain from regretting their Defects, and joining in that Censure passed by a learned *English* Dissenter on this Occasion, "Our Reformers, says he, seem to have been guilty of a considerable Oversight, that they laid aside the solitary or private Masses, without appointing public Communion every Lord's Day in the Room of them.— The Fault of the Church of Rome was not in the Frequency of the Consecration, but in the Priest's eating and drinking all himself after the Consecration. I humbly conceive, it would have been much more prudent (he might have called it dutiful) to have retained the former, and only have laid aside the latter." And as the present Protestants have not advanced a Step beyond the Patterns given them at the Reformation, he adds, "Is it not, if we may speak impartially, a Shame and a Scandal, that it (the Supper) should, in some Places, be administered once a Month, in others once in six Weeks, or two Months, in others only three Times, and in others only once a Year? How very different is this from the Practice of the primitive Church?"

But let us, however, more particularly examine what the real Practice at the Reformation was in this Matter; and, you know, they have been divided under the three Names of *Luther*, *Zuinglius*, and *Calvin*.

The *Lutherans*, who might be said in several Respects to be half-reformed about the Lord's Supper, still also retained the unhappy

happy great Holidays of the Church of *Rome*, yet as they abolished the abominable Mass, and restored to the Church of Christ her Communion in the Supper, so they administered it oftener than on these Holidays: This we learn from their *Confess. August. in cap. de Missa*, which says, "There is however appointed one common Mass, according to the Institution of Christ, wherein the Pastors of the Church consecrate, take, and give to others the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ, and that is practised every Holiday, and on other Days, if any incline to use the Sacrament. None are admitted to the Communion before they are tried," etc. This points strongly, you see, to Frequency; and, in Reality, shews more that Way to be in Practice with that Church, than is presently proposed to be with us.

If we next look into the Customs of the *Zuinglian* Churches, we shall discover Sentiments on this Subject extremely scriptural.— Their *Confessio Helvetica* declares, "*Ritum*, etc. They judge that Rite, Manner, and Form of the Lord's Supper to be most excellent, which comes nearest the Institution of our Lord, and the Doctrine of the Apostles about it.— Of this holy Food therefore we make frequent Use, because, by Means of this Memorial, beholding with the Eyes of Faith, the Death and Blood of him that was crucified, and meditating upon our Redemption, with a sensible Relish of the celestial and a real Foretaste of eternal Life, we are refreshed with Delight inef- fable by this spiritual enlivening Repast of our Inner-Man, and made to rejoice with Joy unspeakable, for the Life, and Immortality brought to Light by the Gospel, and indeed are altogether, with our Souls, and all that is within us, poured forth, and lost in Praise and Blessing for the so astonishing Gift of Christ toward us *." And the Description they give us of their Worship, in §. 23. is precisely that of the first Christians after
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* Not designing this paper so much for show as use, I have contented myself, to convey the sense of the citations from the dead languages, without transcribing the originals themselves, and hope, in comparing them, you in general would find it so; but observing in this passage a strength and beauty, which I could not, I think, by the different idioms of the languages, translate without loss to it, I here give it you as the Helvetian church penned it: "*Hoc sacro tibi ideo saepe utimur, quoniam hujus, in crucifixi mortem, sanguinemque fidei oculis intuentes, ac salutem nostram non sine coelestis vitae gustu, et vero vitae aeternae sensu, meditantes hoc spiritali vivifico intimoque pabulo, ineffabili cum suavitate reficimur, ac inenarrabili verbi laetitia propter inventam vitam exultamus, totique ac viribus omnino nostris omnibus, in gratiarum actionem, pro tam admirando Christi erga nos beneficio effundimur.*"

Pentecost. "*Coetus matrem sacras*, etc. After this Manner we
 " judge the Work of holy Assemblies should be carried on; that
 " first of all the Word of God should be daily published to the
 " People, in a public Place set apart for holy Things;— that the
 " obscurer Things in Scripture should, by well qualified Persons,
 " be opened and explained, that then the holy Eucharist should
 " be celebrated to put the Faith of Believers on Exercise, that
 " fervent and constant Prayer should be made for the Wants
 " and Necessities of all. Other perplexing, useless, and endless
 " Ceremonies we banish from our religious Assemblies." Have
 you ever read any Thing liker the antient Christian Worship of
 every Sabbath? and not the less so surely, that the Lord's Supper
 is in the Heart of it,—But how often in Fact they practise this, I
 have not learned.

As to the *Calvinistical Churches*, they were generally framed
 on the same Model: The Difference, as far as I can observe it
 by their Acts, was this, that some practised the Administration
 of the Supper once a Month, as the Church of *Geneva*;— which
 Example the Dissenters from the Church of *England* have ge-
 nerally followed;— Others administered this Ordinance six Times
 yearly, as we see by the Account of the *Dutch Church*, publish-
 ed at *London*, 1645.

Others had their Acts only for four Times, as the Church of
France; tho' it is evident by the Canon we have cited, they had
 Thoughts of carrying the Matter further, when once they should
 resolve on some Methods to prevent Formality in it. And this, I
 suppose, is the least Number of Times, that any Protestant Church
 allowed by their public Acts, that the Supper should be dispensed
 yearly; tho', by the bitter Complaints of *Calvin*, it would seem
 every particular Church came not up even to that Rule, or at least
 many private professed Christians did not.—

Let us consider how this Matter stood with us in *Scotland* at the
 Reformation; and you may observe that the present *Glasgow*
 Overture refers to an Act of Assembly, 1638, which Act renews
 another Act, 1562, the first that was made in the Church of
Scotland concerning this Matter after the Reformation: Now,
 in that Act it is ordained, " That one uniform Order be kept
 " in Ministration of the Sacraments, and according to the
 " Book of *Geneva*, which, in the first Book of Discipline, is cal-
 " led the Book of common Order." But when we turn to Chap.
 x. of that Book, of the Manner of the Administration of the Lord's
 Supper, what are the first Words we read? Even these, " The
 " Day when the Lord's Supper is ministered, which is commonly
 " once a Month, or so oft as the Congregation shall think expedient,
 " the Minister useth to say," etc. What think you then, Dear
 Sir,

happy great Holidays of the Church of *Rome*, yet as they abolished the abominable Mass, and restored to the Church of Christ her Communion in the Supper, so they administered it oftener than on these Holidays: This we learn from their *Confess. August. in cap. de Missa*, which says, "There is however appointed one common Mass, according to the Institution of Christ, wherein the Pastors of the Church consecrate, take, and give to others the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ, and that is practised every Holiday, and on other Days, if any incline to use the Sacrament. None are admitted to the Communion before they are tried," etc. This points strongly, you see, to Frequency; and, in Reality, shews more that Way to be in Practice with that Church, than is presently proposed to be with us.

If we next look into the Customs of the *Zuinglian* Churches, we shall discover Sentiments on this Subject extremely scriptural.— Their *Confessio Helvetica* declares, "*Ritum*, etc. They judge that Rite, Manner, and Form of the Lord's Supper to be most excellent, which comes nearest the Institution of our Lord, and the Doctrine of the Apostles about it.— Of this holy Food therefore we make frequent Use, because, by Means of this Memorial, beholding with the Eyes of Faith, the Death and Blood of him that was crucified, and meditating upon our Redemption, with a sensible Relish of the celestial and a real Foretaste of eternal Life, we are refreshed with Delight ineffable by this spiritual enlivening Repast of our Inner Man, and made to rejoice with Joy unspeakable, for the Life, and Immortality brought to Light by the Gospel, and indeed are all together, with our Souls, and all that is within us, poured forth, and lost in Praise and Blessing for the so astonishing Gift of Christ toward us *." And the Description they give us of their Worship, in §. 23. is precisely that of the first Christians after

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* Not designing this paper so much for show as use, I have contented myself, to convey the sense of the citations from the dead languages, without transcribing the originals themselves, and hope, in comparing them, you in general would find it so; but observing in this passage a strength and beauty, which I could not, I think, by the different idioms of the languages, translate without loss to it, I here give it you as the Helvetian church penned it: "*Hoc sacro cibo ideo sæpe utimur, quoniam hujus, in crucifixi mortem, sanguinemque fidei oculis intuentes, ac salutem nostram non sine coelestis vitæ gustu, et vero vitæ æternæ sensu, meditantes hoc spiritali vivifico intimoque pabulo, ineffabili cum suavitate reficimur, ac inenarrabili verbi lætitia propter inventam vitam exultamus, totique ac viribus omnino nostris omnibus, in gratiarum actionem, pro tam admirando Christi erga nos beneficio effundimur.*"

Pentecost. "*Costus vitam sacras*, etc. After this Manner we judge the Work of holy Assemblies should be carried on; that first of all the Word of God should be daily published to the People, in a public Place set apart for holy Things;— that the obscurer Things in Scripture should, by well qualified Persons, be opened and explained, that then the holy Eucharist should be celebrated to put the Faith of Believers on Exercise, that fervent and constant Prayer should be made for the Wants and Necessities of all. Other perplexing, useless, and endless Ceremonies we banish from our religious Assemblies." Have you ever read any Thing like the antient Christian Worship of every Sabbath? and not the less so surely, that the Lord's Supper is in the Heart of it,— But how often in Fact they practise this, I have not learned.

As to the *Calvinistical Churches*, they were generally framed on the same Model: The Difference, as far as I can observe it by their Acts, was this, that some practised the Administration of the Supper once a Month, as the Church of *Geneva*;— which Example the Dissenters from the Church of *England* have generally followed;— Others administered this Ordinance six Times yearly, as we see by the Account of the *Dutch Church*, published at *London*, 1645.

Others had their Acts only for four Times, as the Church of *France*; tho' it is evident by the Canon we have cited, they had Thoughts of carrying the Matter further, when once they should resolve on some Methods to prevent Formality in it. And this, I suppose, is the least Number of Times, that any Protestant Church allowed by their public Acts, that the Supper should be dispensed yearly; tho', by the bitter Complaints of *Calvin*, it would seem every particular Church came not up even to that Rule, or at least many private professed Christians did not.—

Let us consider how this Matter stood with us in *Scotland* at the Reformation; and you may observe that the present *Glasgow Overture* refers to an Act of Assembly, 1638, which Act renews another Act, 1562, the first that was made in the Church of *Scotland* concerning this Matter after the Reformation: Now, in that Act it is ordained, "That one uniform Order be kept in Ministration of the Sacraments, and according to the Book of *Geneva*, which, in the first Book of Discipline, is called the Book of common Order." But when we turn to Chap. x. of that Book, of the Manner of the Administration of the Lord's Supper, what are the first Words we read? Even these, "The Day when the Lord's Supper is ministered, which is commonly once a Month, or so oft as the Congregation shall think expedient, the Minister useth to say," etc. What think you then, Dear Sir,

Sir, the Order of *Geneva* is behind the original Way, as twelve is to fifty-two; but, how much are we behind *Geneva*? And indeed I cannot help in this Place declaring, if the warm Desire of my Heart were not to obtain, even that one Heart and one Way were among us, that under Convictions of the Truth, and of the Will of Christ, we would all return, and with the good Hand of God upon us, at once resolve to continue as stedfastly in breaking of Bread, as in Doctrine and Prayers, as the Way of the first Churches, when *the Lord their Redeemer taught them to profit, and led them by the Way wherein they should go*: I say, I cannot help wishing, unless this best Thing were to take Place, that, instead of the *Glasgow* Overture, our Assembly would just go back to their first old Order, in establishing the Book of *Geneva*, or of common Order, by which once a Month was the Practice, or allowed to be so;—or, at least, that the Chap. xi. §. 5. of the first Book of Discipline were renewed, where four Times a Year, or oftener as any several Kirk pleases, is declared to be the Rule.—From these, however, you must observe the Sentiments of our Reformers, agreeing with their foreign Brethren, quite different indeed from what obtains with too many among us; wherein, without any Infringement on Truth, we may certainly say, that we have not improved upon our Fathers, but rather have gone far backward.

That we have fallen from all these (even imperfect) Examples and Appointments of our Predecessors in Religion, only verifies the just Observation, which wise Men have made on all Churches, to wit, that in them, “ what is left behind in the first Settlements, “ is rarely or ever afterwards attained.” For besides what may be justly said about the righteous Judgment of God, in not restoring Opportunities of Well-doing, when once given, they have been neglected or abused, there are many deceitful, sinful Principles in Man tending not to come nearer to the Truth, but rather to degenerate from the Spirit of their reforming Fathers.—Thus an old Puritan emphatically complains, “ For my Part, I “ cannot sufficiently bewail the Condition of the reformed “ Churches, who are come to a Period in Religion, and will go “ at present no further than the Instruments of their Reformation. The *Lutherans* cannot be drawn to go beyond what “ *Luther* saw. Whatever Part of his Will our God has revealed “ to *Calvin*, they will rather die than embrace it; and the “ *Calvinists* stick fast where they were left by that great Man of “ God, who yet saw not all Things.”

The Posterity of Reformers sit often down on what their Fathers attained, as *their Work*, which their Pride therefore will maintain, that it may be called *theirs*. As Pride hindered those they
sepa-

separated from, in Reformation, from forsaking their Errors, because their Fathers were in them : And in this unhappy View, you see, even the Profession of the Truth itself may be stained in some that make it, by their calling Men on Earth *Rabbi* therein, receiving from them as the Word of Men, rather than from the Scriptures, as it is in Truth the Word of God.—

In the Church of *Scotland* we happily indeed went one Step beyond *Calvin* (by whose Name we are called among the Churches) in the Point of the Sabbath.— Oh ! that considering the Clearness of his Sentiments, and the Warmth of his Zeal in this Matter, we had also gone beyond him in his Practice, and had followed the Lord fully in the frequent Administration of his Supper.— But if the not going beyond our Fathers, when the Lord's Truth calls us to it, as in the present Case, be not laudable, by what Name shall we call that Spirit and Practice which falls short, not only of the acknowledged Truth, but even of our Fathers very defective Conformity to it.— This is our Situation, and who can forbear bewailing it ? and that all we now hope to attain in this Matter, clear as the Light itself, as evident as that there should be a Sabbath Day among Christians, or Prayers, Praise, or Doctrine upon it ; that all, I say, we can now struggle for, with Hope of attaining, is a Restoration to our own imperfect State, a hundred Years ago ; a State not behind the first Christians only, but far behind the first Ages of them, far behind what the Reformers knew and desired,— behind what many of them practised,— behind the whole Protestant World, and behind what was once with ourselves.—

But as a Condition, tho' not the very best, yet in some Respects better than another less perfect, must, to every wise Man, be preferable to that other : Suffer me, in the next Place, to further in your Mind, the Desire of coming back at this present Time to where we were of old, by laying before you some of the Advantages which, as I conceive, would or might follow upon the *Glasgow* Overture, or another like it, taking place among us, which now we have not at all, or in a lesser Degree than we would have, if such a Thing obtained.—

And in the first Place, the Observation made in the *Glasgow* Overture is certainly just, “ That our present Method of administering the Supper, particularly the Number of our Sermons, renders the Frequency of it in any Parish, while that continues, impracticable.” The Proposal therefore of the old Way, of one Fasting or Preparation Day, in our Circumstances, is wise and necessary, if we would obtain that Frequency : For otherwise it cannot be often, I had almost said, scarce oftener than at present among us. The Sacrament is, I believe, now more ge-

nerally given even once yearly in our Parishes than formerly, and what is the Consequence? Are not Ministers thereby thrown into a constant Scene of Hurry all the Summer over? Is not the Waste of Countries, thro' Want of Sermon on the Sabbath Day, increased? And the consequential Idleness of those that stay at home on that holy Day, as well as in many Places the irreverent Behaviour of the Multitudes who go abroad, increased also? And must not these Evils, and the Complaints of them, grow, as the Number of our Preachers, who are used to supply on these Occasions, remarkably diminishes? What Minister, on that Season whereon the Lords Supper uses to be dispensed among us, can pretend to give himself to Reading, to Exhortation, or to the many other Duties he owes to his own Flock, to whom his Obligations lie first and strongest? While he is called to feed others, they are often scattered. Is he not hereby also thrown into unpleasant Hurries, many necessary Omissions, or the too superficial Performance of his pastoral Care? While robbed of the most desirable Time for it, he is obliged to put it off to more confined and inclement Seasons of the Year. This brings to Mind a Reflection, that sometimes has been thrown out against some of those called the more popular Men, that while much esteemed abroad, they were not more if not less remarkable for Care of their own People at home, than others about whom there was not so much Noise. As one should be shy in taking up an evil Report against his Brother, without Evidence and full understanding of the Case, so I incline to believe, if ever in any Instances there has been Ground for this Censure, it has arisen not so much from these Mens Want of Concern, or not naturally caring for the State of their own People, as from this, that being called to assist at many Sacraments (and in this Case more than they ought to have gone to,) it has not often been in their Power to overtake, as they ought, or would, their Duties at home: And now, as yearly Sacraments are become universal, these Avocations must be increased, and well nigh equal to all Ministers, and the Inconveniencies in this View neither few nor small; and as this Overture's taking Place, would deliver in a great Measure from them, it must be attended with considerable Advantages, in all their Eyes, who would desire to watch and be faithful to their own Flocks, as those who are to give an Account another Day.

But other and very great Advantages might be expected to flow from the proposed Alteration; for hereby would there be a fair Occasion of leading the People out of several Errors, which, by our present Way, I am afraid, they have fallen into about the Lord's Supper. I shall mention two of them.

One is, "That this is an extraordinary Ordinance of Christ." In one Sense, indeed, that guilty Men should be allowed such a Symbol of near Fellowship with the Father and the Son, without Fear of being consumed, nay, with high Hope of Acceptance and Joy, is like all the rest of the unfearchable Wisdom and Love of the Gospel, very extraordinary; but in the other, and commonly understood Sense of the Word, this Ordinance cannot be called extraordinary; for that it was to be as ordinarily gone about by Christians in their Assemblies, as Prayers and Preaching, both Scripture and Antiquity declare, as hath been already shewn.—The idolatrous Priests of the Mass indeed, having Interest in such an Error, as thereby they have their Gain, may maintain it; but their Views and Advantages be to themselves; *Our Souls, come not into their Secrets!* What Pity is it, however, that any Way or Language of ours should but seem to resemble their Doctrine, *That this is an extraordinary Appointment of Christ?* Our unfrequent Administrations but too naturally lead to this Sentiment; and our Ways of speaking of Sacrament Days being high Days, *etc.* give too much Countenance to it. As very good Men are wont to use this Language, and use it with very good Intentions too, great Modesty with Regard to them, in reflecting on it, is becoming; tho' one who believes every Sabbath is a high Day, and all in themselves equally high, and none of them diminished because we take away a high Action from them, which the Lord of the Sabbath designed should belong to each, cannot so well approve of these Expressions: And that for this Reason, that the Justness of the Application flows not from our obeying the Command of God, in such particular Days so much as by our distinguishing them, through our Neglect of that Command on other Days when we should also obey it.—Let us magnify the Action of the Supper as much as we can, and the Day to which it belongs, we cannot well exceed; but let us beware of saying any Thing about these few Sabbaths, wherein we do this Work of that Day, that will, tho' undesignedly by us, occasion a secret Diminution of the Respect that is due to our many other Sabbaths, and our other high Work of Prayer, Praise, and Doctrine upon them.—Tell me, Dear Sir, if I am running into an Error by this Reflection; I would not willingly be injurious, far less to good Men: But have you no Suspicion, that our high Estimation of Sacrament Sabbaths, I mean, in Comparison of the rest, which we call ordinary ones, may possibly beget in our Minds, so naturally unspiritual and deceitful, less Respect than ought to be, in the Hearts of Christians, to the many other Sabbaths, and the high Duties belonging to them all?

Not is this, if I am unhappily guessing right, a trivial Matter; for, as to the Sabbath itself, *Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy*, is an awful Word.— As to Doctrine: *The Word preached did not profit, not being mixed with Faith in them that heard it.*— Nay, *it is the Saviour of Death unto Death, not of Life unto Life.*— *Take heed what you hear*, saith Christ; and *he that hath an Ear let him hear*, saith the Spirit to the Churches.— *Therefore ought we to give the more earnest Heed to the Things we have heard, lest at any Time we let them slip*, etc. etc.— As to Prayers: *Let him ask in Faith, nothing wavering; for he that wavereth is like a Wave of the Sea, driven with the Wind and tossed; for let not that Man think, he shall receive any Thing of the Lord.*— If these, and many other such Words about the Sabbath, and the Works of the Sabbath, be not *light Words*, if they shew them all to be solemn, and ill Performance dangerous in them as well as in breaking of Bread, how anxious should it make all to be concerned in no uncommanded Thing that may occasion it? But do you truly believe there are none more careless in these other Duties, because it is not the Sacrament Sabbath, or the Sacrament itself they are engaged in?— Or that their being taught, that this is an extraordinary Ordinance, hath no natural Influence to beget such a Mistake?— And when in Fact this is not an extraordinary Ordinance, should not all in the Ministry be particularly excited to balance this Account well?— Whether there is most Good done by making one Day and one Ordinance of Christ extraordinary, and therein to raise Peoples Minds to a high Pitch of Devotion, if its Tendency is to create an habitual Indulgence and Carelessness on other Sabbaths, and Remissness in other Duties which are very solemn too? Or whether it is not preferable to lead People out of their Mistake, by calling them every Lord's Day, or as often as may be, to obey one Command of the Lord as well as another, and thereby arrive to beget a high Fervour daily in the Minds of Christians, in this and all other solemn Days Actions?— And if, in the Prudence of Men, it were to be disputed, which of these Expedients to promote Religion were wisest and best; Shall I be presumptuous in saying, that the Wisdom of our Lord determining, as we know he does, for the last, should put an End to the Strife?

And though this be, in Fact, justly casting out human Authority from the Decision; yet the Words of the Venerable *Calvin*, which I reserved out of the last Citation to this Place, are so much to the Purpose, that you must excuse my transcribing them; speaking of the execrable Contrivance, as he calls it, of the Sacrament's being once a-Year, he says, *Qua factum est*, etc. "For hereby it hath happened, that the most Part, when they have
" once

"once communicated, think themselves fairly discharged for the
 "rest of the Year, and become secure and careless; but it ought
 "to be far otherwise done; every Lord's Day the Table should
 "be spread in the Church, and the Promises, on which they should
 "feed, be declared; and though none should be constrained, yet all
 "should be exhorted, and excited, and the Slothful chid for their
 "Backwardness, that the whole hungry Multitude may be ga-
 "thered in one Body to this pleasant Repast; I therefore did not
 "unjustly complain, that that Custom was of Satan's Contrivance,
 "which, appointing this Ordinance once a Year, throws into su-
 "pine Negligence all the rest of it."—Nor are these the Senti-
 ments of this great Man alone; we see our own Reformers enter
 into them, *First Book of Disc.* Chap. x. §. 5. For you find, that
 in removing the Time of administering the Lord's Supper from
Pasch, they observe, "How superstitiously the People run to that
 "Action then, even as if the Time gave Virtue to the Sacra-
 "ment, and how the rest of the whole Year they are negligent, as
 "if it appertained not to them, but at that Time only." But
 who sees not, that, in our Method of administering the Lord's
 Supper, the Matter of this Complaint still remains, and the very
 good Intention of the Reformers, in this Passage, needs still to be
 pursued by us; for though indeed that Part of the Superstition,
 as to the Time, (at *Pasch*) be taken away, yet is it not too evi-
 dent, that many still run too superstitiously to the Action of the
 Supper once yearly, who the rest of the whole Year are careless
 and negligent about the Duty, as if it appertained not to them, but
 at that Time only; nay more, as if Abstinence from Sin and Spi-
 rituality belonged to them at no other Time?—If this be an Er-
 ror, then, about the Lord's Supper, that it is an extraordinary
 Appointment of Christ; if this naturally produces very unde-
 sirable Effects, it certainly were an Advantage to be delivered
 from it, and so from them.—But how shall the People be deliver-
 ed from these Evils, but by our being put in a Way, by our Pra-
 ctice, to shew that their present Apprehensions are wrong? For
 vain shall all our Representations to them in Words be about
 the Duty of frequent Communicating, and fruitless our Remon-
 strances about their complying with it, while, in Fact, we go on,
 according to their own Notions, seldom spreading the Lord's Table
 before them; and, until the Ministers make an Alteration here,
 we can never be in a Capacity of carrying this Matter further or
 nearer the Truth with the People; and how, without such Means
 as Christ hath appointed, it can be hoped that Christ's Religion
 should be revived or advanced, is what I must leave to others
 to tell.

Ano-

Another Error which prevails about this Ordinance, nearly allied indeed to the former, as flowing, in a great Measure from it, and which, in course, would be prevented, were the other removed, is, That, as this Ordinance is extraordinary, so it is not necessary to Salvation; you will not, I dare say, mistake my Meaning of Necessity here, when I speak of the Opinion of the Sacrament's not being necessary, as an Error, as if I thereby connected Salvation so strongly with it, as if it could not be without it; such Necessity can only belong to the Mediation of Jesus Christ; and such only, therefore, I intend here, as you would apply to any other known Command, in saying from the Scripture, concerning it, that the habitual Subjection to it is necessary, or the Neglect of it, when in the Power of our Hand to yield Obedience, is inconsistent with the Hope of Salvation; but are you not sensible, that People get from under every View of a *Command* and *Law* in this Matter, by our altering the Manner of observing and obeying it? The Generality, we see, have more Notion of yielding to the Law of Christ about Baptism, than to that of the Lord's Supper; yet where is the Difference of these Commands, as coming from Christ? He surely who said, *Go ye and baptize*, said also, *Do this in Remembrance of me*: But so little is thought of delaying this last Command very late, and complying very seldom, that the Transition becomes easy, to no Necessity of yielding to it at all; at least, if it comes not very fairly in the Way, it is not reckoned very criminal to be almost in a perpetual Omission of it. Some, even of the appearingly serious among us, are not apt to have Convictions, though the Intervals should be very long between the Times of their obeying it; nay, let us look to it, if their Practice does not shew, that our Way has led them to find a greater Necessity upon their Minds, to hear Ministers preach, where this Ordinance is dispensed, by their frequent Attendance for that single End, than even to obey the Commandment of Christ himself in it; and is this seemly or lovely? Is it a Matter of Praise, or of good Report?

But if an Assiduity in a Command, appointed to be steadfastly continued in, be judged an Advantage; then must a Proposal be to Advantage, that would lead us out of this Carelessness about the Lord's Supper, from the Want of a due Sense of the Necessity of obeying Christ in it; and so into such a habitual Subjection to it as would please the Lord.

I would further say, that this, or a better Overture's taking Place among us, might be hoped to put us in a happier Way, as to Discipline, than we are at present; how low this is with us, I neither need give myself nor you the Pain of representing; that it is of divine Institution, is as clear as the Lord's Supper is; and that

that it is particularly connected with it, we see from 1 Cor. v. penult. Learned Men demur, whether any, under its Censures, were admitted to the Prayers of the antient Church; but none doubt whether any, in that Situation, were admitted to the Supper; accordingly, any Remains of Discipline that are left with us are still found here, many even now being kept back from Communicating who are brought under no other Censure; that indeed, alone, were it understood, is a very great one; yet is the whole Matter in a very feeble State among us. All good Men are groaning under the Decay of this Ordinance; and wise Men at their Wits End how it should be retrieved; but may not they, who are least esteemed in the Church, tell them both, that we never can expect to restore it, till it is built on the Foundation laid for it in the Church by its Head. Is not frequent regular Communion in the Lord's Supper,—the natural and appointed Means of distinguishing Christians from the World? And who discerns not the Influence which our present Manner of administering the Lord's Supper hath to lose that Distinction, and enervate Discipline? Are there not many now who bear the Fatigue of waiting on a yearly Sacrament, for different Reasons, who would tire of an habitual continuing in what they have no Relish for? or a Church tire of them? For watchful Inspection, be sure, is the Effect of frequent Communion, and Discipline the Fruit of that. If any thing like this were to obtain among us, I need not tell what an Advantage it must be. What was, or is, or ever will be, the Wound under the Fifth Rib to every Church of Christ, but the Loss of Discipline? And are not you sensible we at present are bleeding there? And though I confess the Wound appears so deadly, that my Mind forebodes no thorough Cure; yet if, from any Symptom, I were to hope, it would be no other than our hearty returning to the Institutions of Christ, connected with Discipline, of which a continuing stedfastly in the Breaking of Bread is certainly one.

Besides these great Considerations, there are other desirable Things, which might be looked for by the present Proposal. Would not every Minister, *e. g.* being thereby exempted from a great Part of the now necessary Attendance and Preparation for the Public, be possessed of much valuable Time, and that for a Variety of Duties that have another Sort of Foundation in Scripture than the present Multiplicity of Sermons. Let the best declare, if they are not often in Heaviness, that they can steal so few Moments for calm personal Examination, Meditation, and the Fervour of Prayer about this Ordinance; and that of Consequence, when they have fed others, their own Souls have been but too often hungry. If any say, that, in the Midst of these Throngs, Ministers

ministers have found they have served a good Master; far be it from me, Sir, to dispute that, or to lessen the Lord's Kindness; but as we know not the particular Cases, so we can draw no general Conclusion from them, excepting this, *that the Lord is very gracious, often beyond Expectation, and because it is lawful for him to do with his own what he pleases, often beyond Diligence.* He knows his Servants Frame, and the Necessity they are under, not from his Command, but from their Situation, to bestow less Time than they desire, and would bestow upon some Parts of their Duty on these Occasions: *And like as a Father pitieth his Children, so the Lord pities them who fear him, and gives them Strength for the Day:* But this, however much a Cause of Praise to God, can never justify us, when a fair Occasion offers, of coming nearer the Institution of Christ, and at the same Time, of removing what hinders our being more in the Way of appointed Means in all Duty, and so of having juster Expectations of the Shinnings of his Face upon us. *Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God,* is an awful Precept, meaning, as I suppose, that in ordinary Duties and Providences, we are not, without the full Use of Means, to look for extraordinary Aids. How it applies here I need not illustrate.—Like Things may be said concerning Ministers Families. As Matters now stand, have not their Wives, Children, and Servants, *more Cumber about many Things,* than spiritual People would desire on so holy an Occasion as the Lord's Supper? And though, as before, we dare not doubt of the Lord's Goodness to such of them as fear his Name, and his not *forgetting their Labour of Love in ministering to the Saints;* yet, when overcharged with Care, they certainly wish for a more quiet Hour and Place, to be concerned in about the better Part, than they can command at such Times, and which this Overture, if it prevails, is likely to give them. Unless, then, some want such a Hurry, as a decent Apology, for their not being more spiritually engaged; if they would not always be disturbed, when they should be most recollected; if they would be delivered from Temptations to Formality, in this solemn Action of the Supper, a Sin so apt to beset them from their Obligations to outward Service; if they be not pleased with the Self-deceit (and whose Heart is not deceitful above all Things?) of imagining that their Service will supply or stand for other Things, it might be expected that they, and those concerned in them, for their Sakes, would make a Proposal very welcome, which would ease them of such incommoding outward Circumstances at the Time of the Lord's Supper.

Nor would the Advantages of this Alteration be confined to Ministers in a private Capacity. Might it not be expected, that in Society also they would feel its kindly Effects? Do I judge

wrong

wrong, in saying, that even the Way of our Sacraments hath been, *accidentally*, one of the many Sources of our melancholy Divisions? This is a Part of the Subject, which might be enlarged on without Difficulty, but not without Pain. Who hath always been to blame, this is not a proper Place, though it were possible, to tell. But the overlooking of Neighbours on such Occasions, you well know, hath often made Wounds that could hardly ever be healed. The Fault frequently, in one Sense, it may be, hath been on neither Side. Prejudices, sometimes unreasonable, in Congregations, have occasioned unwilling Neglects. It is not to the present Purpose, to enter into the delicate Argument, about the Duty of honouring a Neighbour before the People, on the one Hand; and, on the other, of yielding to the Prejudices of a People, in order to continue in Usefulness, and the having the Comfort of Peace at Home. It is enough, at present, to observe such disagreeable Things have happened in more Places than one in *Scotland*, and that among Ministers who would have lived, and loved, as Brethren, who have hereby been thrown not only into private Distance, but into unhappy Parties and Disputes elsewhere.—Too frequently, from hence, have better Qualifications been overlooked, even in giving Judgment, while, in Candidates for the Ministry, the Hopes or Fears of being with or against us, in such Things, have been more attended to; a new Settlement is Half my own, saith the Neighbour; Half my Comfort and Peace depends on it: Thence many Medlings and underhand Working, ill becoming Judges;—and many Judgments, under Invocation of the divine Presence too, which the World have cried Shame upon.—Hence much Wisdom, unlike to that which is from above;—and many unseemly Passions, afterwards repented of.—By all such Things have many Characters suffered; and, which is infinitely more important, by such Things in the Hands of Ministers, Religion has been wounded: Neither Offences nor Stumbling-blocks have, alas! been wanting.—We do much to remove such unhappy Things, when we remove the Occasions of them. And if, by this Overture, we are doing the great Thing, coming nearest the Institution of Christ, it will surely be no Displeasure to wise or good Men, that while they are doing this great Thing, they, at the same Time, remove what hath sometimes occasioned Uneasiness, if not Evil. *Judah*, it may be, shall not so much vex *Ephraim*, nor *Ephraim* *Judah*; Interferings shall be less, and Disputes; and their multiplied Evils from that Quarter diminish, in Proportion as these abate: Friendship and Love, with their more amiable Fruits, may more abound. A good Man, peradventure, shall be more sought for, and esteemed, than (pardon me if I cannot speak softly here)

that Judgment, that Plague amongst us, *A good Party-man* : Brethren will watch and exhort, and hearken to one another more, and in such desirable Events, the Profiting would appear unto all, and that this hath been a happy Overture.

Nor would the proposed Alteration fail to have good Effects on private real Christians among us. They shall, as we have insisted, obey the Lord ofner in this Ordinance, and have the Comfort of it, and the many other Advantages that are to be expected here; whereof I cannot now enter into the Detail. There is the less Necessity, indeed, that these are so ordinarily insisted on, and known.

But, in *Winter*, shall this Feast be kept among us, which our multiplied, lengthened, Service now prevents? The *Jews* had a Feast in that Season, an additional one too. But, notwithstanding Christ's Command, and, notwithstanding (though I am ashamed to mention it after the other) our Assemblies, since the Revolution, have oftner than once, by Acts, attempted to remedy this Evil; yet the Multiplicity of Sermons hath still hindered, and while they continue, will still probably hinder, the Bowels of our Saints from being often refreshed by this Ordinance in that Season.

But further, if this Alteration take Place, Christians shall, in Time, be better instructed in the Design of this Institution, and their Duty in it, than now they seem to know it; for, as if we preached not enough besides, the unscriptural Way we have unhappily fallen into, is to preach even at the Lord's Table; and, of Consequence, to hear an Exhortation is the most that many seem to know as their Duty in that holy Action; they therefore naturally desire such Ministers, whose Gifts they most affect, to give it them.—Hence Distinctions often that ought not to be, and least of all then.—Hence a Contempt of the different Gifts of God, in his most faithful Servants, sometimes, and other Evils; but, by the proposed Alteration, where Silence, (although, for Quickening, a few short Sentences are allowed) according to Act of Assembly, 1645. is enjoined, the People would naturally come into juster Notions of their Work at the Lord's Table, while, in their personal Transactions, in *doing this in Remembrance of Christ*, they would learn, without Distraction, from what any Minister says, to look *for their Lord's supping with them, and they with him*. Is there any Command in the Scripture, for discoursing in Time of Communicating? Or did you ever read or hear of a Word or Example in all Antiquity for that Practice? And who is it, that in the least Degree, can *prove his own Work*, (and who but such should be at the Lord's Table?) but finds Employment enough of his own; and, unless led into Mistakes by our Practice,

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but wishes to be far enough from hearing at that Time ; and ought not all to be taught this first Principle, about the Lord's Supper, that *the Fellowship there is with the Father, and the Son* ? That Believers being thus instructed, in looking for that great Blessing, by the promised Influences of the Spirit *on their own Work*, might be oftner made to rejoice in it, than now, while depending too much on such *broken Reeds*, as a Minister's Gifts, and their own Frames under them, they come away from the Wells of Salvation disappointed, and complaining, instead of having that Joy, they might, on better Grounds, expect, were their Eyes less to Men, and more to *Jehovah, as their Strength and their Song, who would also become their Salvation.*—

And, as no Sort of Men should be overlooked by the Church of Christ, I would further add, that it is an Argument, at least, not against the present Proposal, that it would even take out of the Mouths of our Enemies, and it may be, of the Enemies of Religion itself, that Objection to our Way, which is none of the unjustest they have against it : I know *such as are Christ's* must expect Reproaches from the World, and ought with Patience to bear them ; but is there no Difference between their bearing the Contradiction of Sinners, when following the Lord Jesus in his Commandments, and in a Case, however well-meaning in them, which yet cannot be justified intirely, as his Will ?—How often are we told, “ That there is no Foundation in Scripture for our multiplied Sermons, on so many working Days, at our Sacraments, nor any Rule even in our own Church for them ? but that we love to have it thus, as Churchmen always have loved to gather Crowds, to please a Multitude, and be flattered by them ? ” However, I know such Things often proceed from an ill Spirit, are ill-designed, and that they, who make the loudest and most repeated Complaints, have the least Reason from sharing in the Inconvenience (supposing there is one) to reclaim ; that they are generally irreligious Men, and hating the Thing itself altogether, who discover, under this Specious Pretext, their Spite at the whole Institutions of Religion ; for surely, when they complain of this heavy Burden, as Christ said on another Occasion, *they touch it not with one of their Fingers.* But such Objections are old ones among Unbelievers ; I find them strongly and plausibly laid by *Spinoza*, and Men like him, in our Day, readily adopt them. *Hujus igitur mali causam quaerens, says he, ministerii dignitates, et ejus officia, beneficia aestimare, et pastores summo honore habere, vulgo religioni fuit. Simulac enim hic abusus in ecclesia incepit, et amor divinae religionis propagandae, in sordidam avaritiam et ambitionem, atque ita ipsum templum in theatrum degeneravit ; ubi non ecclesiastici doctores sed oratores audiebantur, quorum nemo desiderio tenetur,*
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populum

populum docendi, sed eundem in admirationem sui rapiendi, et dissidentes publice carpendi, et eos tantum docendi quæ nova ac insolita, quæque vulgus admirabatur, etc. Praef. ad Tract. Theol. Polit.—

Now, though I certainly believe there is as little Ground for such Censures on many, at least of the Ministers of the Church of Scotland, as on any others; and that particularly at Sacraments, the Truths of the Gospel have been oftener declared, with as little Selfishness in any Sense, and as much commendable Zeal, as has been found in any other Part of the World; yet it must be owned, that to Mankind it may otherwise appear. Nor can it be denied, that Men of other and better Characters reflect upon our lengthened Service on the Occasion of the Lord's Supper; and with kinder Intentions to Religion, and to Ministers, wish for an Alteration in this respect. — Would we deviate, then, from the Spirit of the Apostles, if, by going into the present Proposal, we should take out of the Mouths of many, such Reflections as we here mention, especially, when, in doing so, we forsake no Command of God, but are rather in the Way of obeying him: Let us therefore in this, and for this Reason, follow *Paul, who would give no Offence neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of God; and what I do, says he, I will do, that I may cut off Occasion from them that desire Occasion.*

I should not, I think, be straitened to mention other Advantages, which might be expected from this Overture's prevailing, or farther to illustrate these; but sure there is enough hinted, to satisfy any wise Man of the Reasonableness of it, or enough, at least, to stir him up to an Inquiry about it, as to the Issue of which there can be little Jealousy; he will be very singular among thoughtful knowing Men, who shall say, that the Sacrament's being dispensed once yearly, is sufficient in a Christian Congregation. *Good Meaning*, I own, may be in an Opposition to this Overture; but the Prejudices must be *deeply rooted*, or the Opinion *slightly taken up*; indeed, I think no Man can fairly examine the Subject, without desiring it were carried vastly farther. —

Before I leave this Part of the Subject, I hope there is little Necessity for telling you, that when I speak of Advantages from the proposed Alteration, I mean not, they will *certainly* follow upon its taking Place. You cannot mistake me here; there are many obvious Things, you know, which, if they happened, would blast this or any Mean of Grace, or indeed all of them, and that when enjoyed in the purest and most perfect Manner. Thus, by this Alteration, it was said that Ministers shall have more Leisure, both for private and public Duties than now. This, certainly, is an Advantage; the Price will be in their Hands; but we say not it will *certainly* follow, they will make

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due Use of it; they may be the worst of Fools in the Possession of that Talent; and, instead of giving themselves to Reading, may waste it in guilty Sloth; or, instead of employing a due Share of it in pastoral Care, may squander it away in Diversion and Company-keeping, or Things equally destructive of the good Ends proposed, and so destroy all; again, frequent and regular Communion was represented as an Advantage to Christians; it certainly is so, but Indifference, Formality, and Unwatchfulness, in Ministers and People, may turn Good into Evil, so of the rest. And if this melancholy Case were universal, our Advantages, no doubt, in the Anger of God would prove our Ruin; we could expect nothing from him *but the leaving our House desolate*, as others before us, who have been exalted to Heaven in Privileges, have, by the Abuse of them, been brought down to Hell. But none, however, will say it is tenable, that, because of such possible bad Consequences through our Corruption, therefore we should not embrace the Privileges of the Gospel, or the Advantages of its purest Ordinances. Were such Reasoning just, no Church would ever have gone, according to the exact Rules of Christ, for fear of the like Event, nor any Christian attempt Duty, in dread of Miscarriage, and incurring the Aggravations peculiar to such Transgression, and which, properly, are not found with those Sinners that never attempted Duty. But there are Remedies appointed, in that Wisdom wherein God abounds in the Gospel, for these Dangers; and hereafter we shall have Occasion to mention, what he hath provided against the Fears of the present Case: In the mean Time, all a Church can say in such a Matter is, that here are Advantages in one which are not at all, or in a Comparison, not so much to be obtained by us in another Way: Therefore it is our Wisdom and Duty to embrace it; and, as by its Advantages, we shall have more Access to spiritual Improvement; we venture on the Dangers under the Views of his Mercy and Faithfulness, who hath commanded the Duty, and promised against the Danger, that his Grace shall be sufficient; but this properly belongs to the Answers of the Objections made against this Overture, which fall next to be considered. And,

As to these Objections, I will not hide from you, that in beginning to answer them, I cannot help feeling a Sort of Shock in my Mind, as it appears to me, at the Strangeness of the Thing, namely, that there should be a Necessity in a Protestant Church, under no Restraints nor outward Force, to make long Apologies and Reasonings in endeavouring but a very partial Submission to an undisputed Law of Christ: Were we pleading for a human Ceremony, or what had a doubtful Look as to Lawfulness, or were it an Addition to the Institution of Christ that was proposed, there

there might be Use for Pains and Apologies; but that these should be necessary, when the Call is to eat the Lord's Supper, and that with confessed Purity as to the Manner of it, but four Times a Year, instead of, as it was from the Beginning, fifty Times; forgive me for repeating, that this appears so oddly to me, that I cannot restrain this Dictate of my Mind, "That it were incomparably more decent in a Church of Christ, which professes the Scripture to be the only Rule of Faith and Manners, to be writing an Apology, that the Return of the Lord's Supper was proposed to be so seldom, as four Times yearly in every Congregation, than that it was to be so often." But as an Opposition here cannot be supposed to flow in those who make it, from a Disaffection to the Lord's Supper being often dispensed; and as it is unhappily necessary, so, no Doubt, it is a Duty to take all Pains, in all Gentleness, to remove every well-meaning Scruple, even in so plain a Case, and the rather that it hath ever been experienced, that when ever a national and old Practice has obtained, tho' in itself never so ill founded, such is the Subjection of the human Mind, to ancient or received Customs, that a Care and Tenderness in satisfying our Brethren, becomes a Debt we owe to the Weakness of our Nature. Thus the Lord Jesus, who knew what was in Man, remembered his Frame, and put not new Wine into old Bottles, in the highest Matters of Salvation, lest the Bottles should burst.

Like long-suffering did the Holy Ghost, who was in the Apostles, shew to the believing *Jews*, in removing their national Ceremonies; — much more, surely, in us is it seemly to deal gently with one another, especially when as it is said, the Objections against even a wise Alteration in a Church, flow from good Intentions in those that make them. This, I believe, is the present Case; there are Objections moved or insisted on, more from the Fear of the Consequences, than that the Justness of the Thing itself is called in Question; and for my Part, as is dutiful and becoming, in examining such Scruples as have come to my Knowledge, I desire to endeavour it in such a Manner, as to oblige the warmest and most determinate Opposers of this Measure, should it fall into their Hands, to say, "His Intentions are good, tho' he hath not succeeded in persuading us." And the

1. Objection I mention is one abundantly apt, at first Sight, to weigh with many; for it is said, "That if this Proposal takes, the Edification of the People, which now they have by the Variety of Gifts of the many called to assist at Sacraments, will be prevented." But how obvious and various are the Answers to this? — What Law hinders any Minister from edifying his People in this Way of the Variety of Gifts as often as he pleas-

pleaseth? — In some Churches an Interchanging of Pulpits on Sabbath Days is made very happily to answer this good End. — Again, let Congregations fast often, according to Christ's Will in his Absence (and just Causes, alas! are too seldom wanting,) and so obtain that good Thing, as neighbourly Assistance either in Prayer or Exhortation, would, on such Occasions, be very desirable. But why should we connect this with the Lord's Supper, which Christ hath not done, more than with the Lord's Day? Let the Lord's Command be produced for the one more than for the other. — Again, the Method as now proposed, of four Times yearly *at least*, with a Preparation or Fasting-Day, affords as fair an Occasion for this Variety, as our present Practice doth. — But most of all, if it is made a Reason against repeating the Lord's Supper, without a Variety of Gifts and Sermons (for with this a frequent Repetition is impracticable,) because the Edification which the People have by a Variety of Sermons, would thereby be prevented, let those who make the Objection, soberly lay their Hand upon their Hearts, and think how they can answer to God, or the Church of Christ, for preventing, by that Way, a greater and more sure Edification, by restraining the Lord's People from that Supper, where he hath promised to drink the new Wine of the Kingdom with them in their often doing this to his Remembrance. Whether the Dispute about edifying Christ's Church here, be not at the Bottom between the Commandment of God, and our Invention, is submitted to the Judgment of every ingenuous and discerning Christian.

2. There is another Objection moved against this Proposal, namely, "That the Frequency of this Ordinance will tend to take away the Solemnity of it." We see the Church of *France* in their Canon point at such a Difficulty; they judged it should be oftener than four Times yearly (the Number now proposed with us,) but till they took Order about this Particular of maintaining its Solemnity, appointed it not oftener. Here, by the by, it appears, that notwithstanding this Risk, they could have no Thoughts of having it seldomer than this Number of Times, which some among us think would destroy all our Solemnity, were it so obtaining: This mistaken Argument indeed can be almost equally applied against all Sorts of Repetition of this Ordinance; for if the seldomer the more solemn, — and if the more solemn the better, no Man can fix the distant Period, wherein it would be best to repeat the Administration; and as it strikes against the Lord's Supper every Sabbath, every Month, every Quarter, so also may it be used against every Year, especially when different Congregations having it, tho' once yearly only, yet on different Sabbaths, may greatly tend to lessen that Sort of Solemn-

Solemnity which arises from its rare Administration. — The Absurdity of this Objection might be justly shewn by a Train of Reasoning of this Sort; but as it is so much insisted on, I would willingly give it a fuller and more distinct Consideration; bear with me then a little on this Head.

To illustrate this Matter of the Solemnity of the Lord's Supper, I would observe, that in general, we are used to think that Thing solemn, where there is a Representation of what is important, great, surprizing, and interesting, worthy to constrain the Attention, to command a Fixedness, Esteem, and Reverence, to excite also unto every suitable outward Behaviour of Awe, Wonder, or Praise, or such like towards the real or supposed Moment of the Objects presented before us. — There are just Foundations for such Things in Nature, and there are often false ones, and these ought carefully to be distinguished by us: — For as of all great and good Things there may be Counterfeits, so there have been many false Solemnities in the World, and many false Causes of them; particularly when political and designing Men, to serve their own Ends, have contrived, and, in the Place of real Greatness and Worth, have substituted such Circumstances of Surprize and Wonder, as might create or preserve in the Minds of their thoughtless Fellow-Creatures, an awful Respect for Things false and insignificant; and which in themselves had no real Foundation or Title for such Regards. — Thus, among the *Romans* and other Worshipers of false Gods, a Rarity of Representation (from whence you cannot but observe the very Word *Solemnity* itself, *Solus, et Annus* has its original Derivation,) was thought necessary to preserve Reverence, as the frequent Views of what was deaf or dumb, tho' of Gold or Silver, must naturally have lost it. — Thus splendid Entertainments and Shows, to dazle the Eyes, and the assembling vast Multitudes, which is so apt to strike with Awe, and every other Thing proper to blind or astonish, were made use of to supply the Want of real Worth, Excellence, or the Power of saving or destroying, which their Gods had not. —

Neither Christianity, being the Truth of God itself, — nor this Institution of its Lord in the holy Supper, where that Truth is collected and at once exhibited to a lively and glorious View, stand in Need of such artful Supplements to procure Reverence and Solemnity. — As the Foundations of the Solemnity in Christ's Religion were otherwise, (nay, oppositely to what the World had been formerly acquainted with,) laid in his Death; so in appointing this outward Symbol of it, he neglected every Circumstance; you may observe, that heretofore had been in Use to aid the begetting public Reverence among Men. — No Rarity of Representation is thought of by him, every Lord's Day his Disciples are to be

gathered to this Spectacle.— No Grandeur is appointed in this Feast; the most simple and common, tho' justly indeed the most useful and refreshing, Elements of Bread and Wine, at the same Time shew forth his Death, and afford the Repast over it.— No Gaudiness of outward Apparel is called for: If the inward Man be fitted well, no Matter for the outward Garments of the Guests.— Nor is there a *Necessity* for striking Multitudes, a few faithful ones at that Banquet can make it very solemn.— Without such Things as have produced false Reverence in the World, in this Institution is found every Ingredient necessary to Solemnity; nay, every Ingredient calculated to raise to the highest possible Degree of it.— Shall we call some of them to Remembrance?

The Friends of Christ then, at his Table are gathered in the full Credit of the Certainty and Justice of their own Condemnation, by a holy God, because of Sin; and trembling in the Fear of eternal Death as the Effect of it, according to the Word of his Threatening; profess their coming unto Jesus as the Son of God, and having Life in him for such as they are; and in eating this Supper, remember his finished Work of Righteousness, who was dead and is now alive; rejoicing in it as what the Father is pleased with, and hath glorified: For this they are thankful, blessing the Father of their Lord, and rejoicing in him, in his Son, and in the Spirit; in one another, and in the divine Glory shining in this Redemption; by this Action they shew forth, and publicly glory in the Cross of Christ, as the Glass wherein it is beheld; and being constrained by the Mercies of God, and the Love of Christ, they present their Bodies as living Sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God, as their reasonable Service; determined no more to live to themselves, but to him who died and rose again; and thus separating themselves from the World, to the Service of God, and to the Hope of their Lord's Appearance, they confess themselves Pilgrims and Strangers in the Earth, and declare they are seeking another Country; applying to that Throne of Grace, where they have found Mercy, to obtain Grace in Time of Need; and thus, while they sing a Song of Zion to their God and the Lamb, their Hearts are comforted, being knit together in Love, while in the Assurance of their Understandings they acknowledge the Mystery of God, even the Father, and of Christ, in this Action.— In higher or lower Degrees, I suppose, these are some of the material Things that are represented, and are desired to be felt by all Saints at the Lord's Supper, their particular Cases are infinitely various, but all have their Connections and Dependence on these great Generals, and are like them, important, having their Relation to Things eternal.— Here then are Matters truly solemn, new,

surprizing, important, awful, and interesting; worthy to shut out every other Concern, and bring every other Imagination down, — to arrest the whole Man, nay, the whole World of Men, at once and for Eternity, filling with Esteem, raising to Praise, if not, as more befitting the great and lasting Reasons of Astonishment, striking dumb! — What outward Circumstances of Solemnity are needful here, where there is the least spiritual enlightening, or any Eye-Salve from Christ to see in Faith? Once suppose the Facts whereof this Action of the Supper is the Representation, even the Sufferings of Christ, and the following Glory, to be real, and the Action must stand immoveably great and solemn, against all Efforts to make it appear otherwise. The Neglect of Thousands minding perishing Things will not make what is here set forth less worthy of Esteem or Pursuit, or these Men however few less wise, who, in this Action, profess their Desire of heavenly Substance, because others are treasuring up in their Folly that which cannot profit. — When the Men of Ridicule bring their Test of Truth, what will they laugh to scorn? Will not their Derision recoil, when Things only that are lovely, Praise-worthy, and great; such as God, his Glory, Christ, and his Grace and Power to save, and such like Things, are here to be found? — Will the Contempt of the proud make these Things little, in themselves so great, and which, to the Things of their Ambition compared, are, as the whole Universe is to a few Bubbles, soon to burst? — And as these truly solemn Things, under this Representation of the Supper, can stand the Shock of all Enquiry and Contempt, so are they indeed of such real Importance as to stand in Need of no Supplements necessary to false Greatness and Solemnity; what to such Things is profitable, is hurtful here; as every Thing is, that at all diverts the Heart and Eye from the great Things signified by this Memorial, which never can be beheld, pried into, esteemed, or praised sufficiently, but which the more and longer they are attended to, must produce the greater Admiration and Love; and as therefore in an outward Representation, they need no Embellishment, so Christ provided none for them: — For, will a frequent Engagement here pall the believing Soul? Things truly great like this, if any Thing were like it, decay not thro' repeated Representations; That is proper to false Appearances only; least of all therefore to what shews forth Jesus crucified, but now alive, the Father pleased with him, and with his Brethren on his Account, Men passing from Death to Life, from Fear to eternal Hope, and their glorying in the Cross of Christ as the immoveable Foundation of it, and of their Consolation therein. Can such substantial Things grow old with Years? Does their Importance or Awfulness

ness lessen by frequent and repeated Views? Why then are not Angels tired of praying? why not weary of their Songs? And as Rarity or long Intervals are not necessary to keep up the Reputation and Solemnity of this Ordinance, so neither are these other Things usually employed to help false or imperfect Greatness, such as the Shew of sumptuous Apparel or Entertainment, new Appearances or gathered Multitudes.— But if from the Use of Multitudes at our Sacraments, any were likely to hesitate about the last of these, and doubt if a goodly Number were not needful to make the Lord's Supper solemn, and therefore inclined to insist, that this Proposal will probably be followed with this Consequence, that as many would abstract from Communion, who came when this Administration is seldom, but will not when it is often, so thereby the Lord's Table will be thin, and thence the Solemnity be much abated: After having observed, that if in those, who are in Use to communicate, when the Administration is seldom, there be any *good Thing towards the Lord*, it ought to be the Care of Ministers to shew them their Duty, in this Respect, and the Truth, in Time, will doubtless find its Way into their Hearts; so the Solemnity in this View will not be lost for them. I would next take Notice, that as to the rest or any Numbers making a Multitude as such, this does not enter so properly into the Notion of the Solemnity of the Lord's Supper as some imagine. To illustrate this, let it be observed, That neither good nor evil Things of different Species can always be compared together, as their several Qualities lie differently.— Thus Duties to ourselves, and to our Neighbours are each so beautiful, one knows not which in Comparison to prefer.— Robbery, again, and Intemperance, are both so odious, that it is not easy to say which should be most dispraised:— So it is here, there is so much Awfulness in a great Multitude's professing their Faith in the eternal Things of the Gospel, that one cannot well enough express the Solemnity of the Sight.— Again, a very small Number expressing their Desire to escape the Wrath to come, by Jesus Christ, in sitting at the Lord's Table in Midst of a sinful and careless World, has some striking Circumstances that are not in the other.— Thus the glorious March of the Thousands of *Israel*, from the Captivity and the Plagues of *Egypt*, under the Blood of the Passover, thro' the *Red Sea*, to a promised distant Land, was surprizingly awful:— Yet I should be straitened to say it were more so, than that single Believer *Noah* with his Family, moved with Fear for coming Wrath, entering into the Ark of God to escape it, in the Sight of a whole secure beholding World, ready, for Want of like Faith, to be swallowed up of the Waters.—

It was doubtless very solemn to see the Thousands after *Pentecost*

*Pentecost
praying*

breaking Bread.→ But, is your Soul less arrested, less wrapt up in Awe, when you think of the upper Room, and the Twelve only, dividing the Cup among themselves?— So still, when I think of but two or three being gathered together to this Ordinance, in the Exercise of Faith, Love, and Hope, Christ breathing on them, making them joy in God through him, by whom they receive the Atonement, I cannot separate Solemnity from my Thoughts,—as I own indeed I cannot either, when a greater Number is engaged in the same Action. I say these Things to shew, that what we call Solemnity, does not, in the Lord's Supper, properly depend upon a Multitude, that striking Circumstance in the World's Eyes in other Things, and which some may unwarily think needful here.— It is another Thing that makes this Action solemn, “ Men new born of God by the Spirit, in the Exercise of Grace upon God and Christ, and the great Things of the Gospel, whatever their Numbers be, will make the breaking of Bread a very solemn Thing.” And no Numbers, however great or outwardly splendid of another Character, lying yet in Darkness, Sin, and Death, can either make or add to Solemnity here; Thousands of such on the contrary destroy it, and make the Table of the Lord contemptible.— We know (*Mal. Chap. i.*) what did so in the Old Testament; the blind and the lame, *etc.* and dead Carcasses were ever an Abomination before the Lord.— Nor are we ignorant what corresponds to these in the New Testament: And nothing outward can ever supply such a Defect.— One *Elijah*, with a very small Company of true Worshipers of the living God, praying down the Fire of the Spirit to lick up the Water in the Trench, and by touching the Wood, Dust, and Stone to cause a living Flame mount up to God, is a Matter of infinitely more Solemnity, than 450 unspiritual Priests, in all the Apparatus of outward Show, attended by Princes and Thousands crying all Day aloud; nay, though in their blind Zeal, they cut themselves when no God descends, nor any Symptom of his Presence is near.—And I dare not conceal it, that were this to be the Effect of this Overture's obtaining, that hereby Multitudes who can never make any Solemnity at the Lord's Supper, would withdraw till Things befitting the Action were seen about them, what a notable Reason I should think it for giving an Approbation to it.

If these Things in general are allowed, but the Objection not departed from, I suppose it must next be pressed in this Manner, “ That such is our Weakness in Christianity, that though the Things of it themselves do not, yet do we want such Admonitions to prevent too much Familiarity, and to beget the desired Solemnity, and that a Rarity of this Action, and many
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* being gathered together, are very conducive now to that End." But here we would take Notice, that besides it is beyond all Controversy an unanswerable Reply to this, that the best Judges, even God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, have thought otherwise *, by not appointing such Things, but the Reverse of them, in the Supper; yet let it be farther observed, whereto this Reasoning tends, viz. That in all other awful Duties, where there is Danger in the Mis carriage, through too great Familiarity, we should also be seldom ingaged, that so the Solemnity being increased by the Unfrequency, our Danger might be less of Rashness or Misbehaviour in them.— We have formerly hinted, you know, how awful it is to pray, to hear, to keep Sabbath; and I can have no Sort of Doubt, if one Sabbath, and one Act of public Worship, of ten that are now in use among us, were only practised, but that the outward Appearances of Solemnity would be greater by Multitudes, and other Circumstances.— But would the most jealous of the Want of Solemnity in the Lord's Supper, by the proposed Frequency, advise to this Measure, that Christians should a few Times in the Year only attempt in Prayer to enter into the holiest of all by the Blood of Jesus, as then it might be expected the Addresses would be more solemn?— Or that they should

* Though, as a very discerning person hath said, " That forms must preserve religion among men," yet certainly God is the only judge what kind and number of these is best proportioned to his several dispensations, and needful to the men under them.--- Thus he gave, for wise reasons, many more forms to the dispensations of shadows under Moses, than he hath thought proper when the veil is taken away, and men now see face to face.--- And doth not the spirit, that leads to alter the appointments about the Lord's supper, and would plant other guards, or contrive other assistances for its solemnity than God hath appointed, at the same time in some measure diminish his judgment,--- and open an endless door to all the pomp of ceremony, will-worship, garbs, or music; whose devisers, in their wisdom, may insist on their usefulness, to heighten the solemnity of every part of the service of God, as those who plead for these things say they are useful for that end in the Lord's supper? I have read nothing juster on this matter than what a great man of reason, and at the same time a high-church man, hath said, which is so applicable to all such subjects, I mean, Dr. Taylor, in his *Duct. Dubit.* who, speaking of the sacrament, says, Vol. 2. c. 4. p. 12. par. 2. " For in these rites which are ministries of grace, no man must interpose any thing that can alter any part of the institution, or make change or variety in that which is of divine appointment; for the effect in these things depends wholly on the will of God, and we have nothing to discourse or argue, for we know nothing but the institution, nothing of the reason of the thing; and therefore we must in these cases, with simplicity and obedience, apply ourselves to practise as we have received, for we have nothing else to guide us; memory and obedience, not discourse and argument, are here in season." How applicable and strong this is to the present case, I need not represent.

should have the Word seldom preached to them, as it is likely they would give more earnest Heed to the Things spoken? yet is he a wiser Man than I, that, from the Will of God, or the Christians that best understood it, or from the Nature of the Thing either, can find a Difference between the one Case and the other?

But, Dear Sir, to our own Eye-sight and Experience, all these Reasonings are vain; for whether (I would calmly ask him, that makes these Objections) are they esteemed most lively and most solemn in Prayer, who are seldom or more habitually engaged in that Duty? Nay, more, whether they who among ourselves receive the Lord's Supper oftneft, or more rarely, are esteemed, when present at it, to be there with most Solemnity? Hearken, I pray you, to the Sentiments of one upon this Subject, who is wont to be esteemed very sound and very solid. "Frequent it should be, says Dr. *Charnock*; the too much deferring does more Hurt than frequent Communicating; the oftner we carefully and believably communicate, the more disposed shall we be for it; Abstinence from it can never be good, but, *ex accidente*, by our Indisposition; but to communicate believably is good in itself: Now, that which is good in itself, is to be preferred before that which is good accidentally; if we abstain from it from Reverence, we may the rather come for Reverence; for if it be worthily received, it increases our Reverence for God, and our Affection to him. That is the best Reverence of God, which owns his Authority.—"

In fact, were not the first Christians reverent in their frequent Approaches to the Lord's Supper? Is this doubted or denied? If it is still said they had more of the Holy Ghost; it is answered, if the Want of him makes us shrink back from the Supper, how do we so often venture on other Duties without him? Is he less necessary for Acceptance in Praise, Prayer, *etc.* than for this Duty? Can we do without him? Or is there no Danger, if, through our Crime, he helps not our Infirmities many or all of them? Is the Promise or the Threatening otherwise laid to this than other Parts of the Worship of God?—Again, had the first Christians more of the Holy Ghost? For what Reason was it so? Is not the Command to us as well as to them? Is not the Promise still annexed to it? Is not the Residue of the Spirit, which was in them, still with Christ, the Fulness still remaining? Is the Lord less liberal now than heretofore? Does he upbraid more, or is he more wearied of receiving, or breathing on his People? These Things, I suppose, will not be said; but is there still a Difference in the Ways of an unchangeable God? Whence then does it flow? Where can it ly? Whatever is in this Matter, I can see no Way of accounting for it but one, *viz.* that we

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neglecting these Commands the first Christians abode in, and being thus less in the Way of our Duty, have less of these Promises connected with our Duty, made out to us, than they had. The Inference from this to frequent Communion is so obvious, that I need not formally make it.

If it should still be said, "That though, with some, the Life of Religion is continued, and increased by the frequent Use of this as well as other Ordinances; yet, with the Generality, Religion is so low, that absolute Formality is only to be looked for from a frequent Use of this Appointment." As to this it is fit to observe, that nothing can be juster than the Fear of Formality in Christians under the Ordinances of the Gospel.—The melancholy Experience of every Age, and that too where these Ordinances have been in their fullest and purest Forms, declares it; nay, the Scripture, in the most peremptory Manner, forewarns, that this is always to be looked for, and commands it should be carefully looked after; there is no Book in the New Testament, that does not foretel, or complain of, or threaten not only such Formality, but Apostasy too; no Wonder, therefore, that Persons concerned about Religion should have Fears of this Sort.—But how distinct, inconnected with, nay opposite, is this Apprehension to any Influence, this, or any other Ordinance of Christ can have, to produce these melancholy Things, whose very End of Institution is to prevent them? and what, therefore, the Continuance in them may best be expected to effect? and who, indeed, in Sobriety of Thought, can imagine that frequent Communion, particularly, can be any Occasion of Formality in Religion, or failing of the Grace of God? or that Unfrequency therein can be a Remedy against it? or that it is one of Christ's Remedies?—Observing, Dear Sir, the fruitful Imagination of Men, I know any Side of a Question, may, among themselves, be made feasible:—And observing their Self liking, or Self-conceit, or Pride, as you please to call it, I am not surprized to find there is very rarely a yielding to the better by those who happen to be on the worst Side of an Argument; so this Question, I own, might be long enough in Dispute, and undecided, were it left to Men to determine, whether frequent Communion would not occasion Formality in this Action, and in all Religion; but when a Christian, speaking to a Christian, finds a Part of the Will of Christ clear on a Point of Difference,—delivered from the miry slippery Paths of Dispute, he finds his Feet as upon a Rock, settled and safe: Thus, about the present Question, I think there is so clear a Revelation of the Will of God, that I would willingly hope, Men having once considered it, would think well, before they again made the Fears of Formality in Religion a Reason for attending seldom on the Ordinances,

nances, and on this Ordinance of the Supper.—In the Epistle to the *Hebrews*, (among many other such Scriptures which might easily be produced) we find in its inspired Writer frequent Fears and Cautions against Formality among Christians, and against Apostasy, to which it leads: But what are his Directions, his appointed Remedies? Unfrequent Communicating, and such like? nothing less; quite other Cures are they which he prescribes, even Watchfulness, constant Exhortation, Stedfastness in the Profession of Christ, depending for that Stedfastness upon Grace, from a faithful promising God, Christians provoking one another to Love, and good Works, and the Exercise of Christian Discipline, where the gentler Ways of Exhortation, *etc.* will not do. The Passages where you find these Things clearly are, Chap. iii. 12.—Chap. x. 19.—23. Chap. xii. 12.—18. and in Chap. x. 25. particularly there is this Remedy provided, *Not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together, as the Manner of some is, but exhorting one another; and so much the more, as you see the Day approaching.* Here, then, is a Reasoning of a Sort, and from a Quarter which cannot be gainsaid, as in this we think there is a full Argument, for a constant abiding in the Lord's Supper, as a proper Remedy against the dreaded Formality and Apostasy;—For what End did the Christians assemble together?—And in what were they engaged, when gathered to one Place? Did they not break Bread constantly, as is above abundantly shewn?—Did they ever assemble without it? The continuing stedfastly, therefore, in the Breaking of Bread, must be acknowledged as one Remedy of the Holy Ghost, against Formality, *etc.* in Religion, until it either be shewn, that the Breaking of Bread was not the Work of Christians, when assembled together, and which therefore is not included in this Exhortation;—or that it was only the first Christians, that were bound to hearken to this. Though the following Clause, *And so much the more as you see the Day approaching*, looks rather (if in this Case a Rather can be admitted) like a greater Binding of a constant Attendance, in this and all the Ordinances connected with Assembling, upon us than it was upon them, in as far as we are so many hundred Years nearer the great and terrible Day of the Lord than they were; and if the Day here spoken of be reckoned the Day of *Jerusalem's* Destruction, this will rather heighten than lessen the Force of the Argument; as that Day was a Type of the next and awful Day, wherein we *Gentile Christians* have all our Concern; for this makes its Terrors the more certain and awful to us, when we see the Lord repented not of the Evil on *Jerusalem*, but executed his Wrath to the uttermost there, the sure Presage of the full Execution of all his Terrors upon all who are not diligent to be found of him in Peace, in that last Day of Vengeance so much upon his Heart. I pray
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you to recommend the serious Consideration of this Passage, *as before the Lord*, to any good Man you hear doubting or objecting against the Frequency of the Lord's Supper, as tending to waste away its Solemnity, or create Formality; I cannot see how his Heart will get from under it; it so clearly appears, I think, that the Provision of Jesus Christ to his People, against Formality, or failing of the Grace of God, and the upholding of their Life in him, is a constant assembling of themselves together, to eat his Supper, as well as Diligence in any other Mean of Grace, and that, with the single outward Help and Guards of the due Exercise of the Gifts and Discipline in his Church, that I cannot, with any Fancy of mine, figure what a Mind, giving Ear to Christ, can say against it; and this is not only the Provision in a vigorous and flourishing State of any Part of his Body; but no other Remedy is mentioned in a more languishing Situation;—and least of all is the forsaking the assembling together, or the Neglect of any Part of commanded Duty, when assembled, prescribed, or permitted by the Lord, in any such State. This is our own, not his Invention.

If any, laying hold on what is last mentioned about the Helps, and outward Guards against Formality, should insist, that, admitting what is represented to be true; yet, that our Helps and Guards, particularly in the Matter of our Discipline, are so low, that the Influence this may have upon the Lord's Table, may rather tend to make it contemptible than comfortable, and the more certainly bring upon us what we fear, an universal Decay of Religion. Not caring to compare myself with others, I say not, that no Man has a stronger Sense of the Danger here represented than I.—But, as formerly, I here again declare, that to me this appears to be our deadly Wound*; yet quite opposite is the Inference I would

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* One melancholy instance of the decay of religion, by this means, is in the church of France. Mr. Quick, after many eulogiums on their discipline, tells, "That the pious reformers saw such necessity for a just execution of it, that the whole canons were appointed to be read in every consistory before the ministration of the Lord's Supper;" and adds, "Oh! that the generation which succeeded the first reformers had not lax'd the reins, how happy might they have been? In the morning of the reformation they were fair as the moon, etc. The greatest princes of France submitted their necks to this golden yoke of Christ." This, I suppose, relates to the Prince of Condé, who appealed from the consistory of Rochelle, for declining to admit him to the Lord's table, as a prize had been taken from the enemy, by a ship under his commission after publishing peace with them, wherein the synod of St. Foy approved the conduct of the consistory, etc.---- How afterwards, indeed, the lump was leavened, at the revocation of the edict of Nantz, a letter from a Protestant at Metz shews, beyond the power of all painting and rhetoric; for, in making an apology for his own foul step, he tells his father,----that of all the families in Metz, there are left but two women,

draw from being in such a Situation, than what is above; some say, because it is so, abstain from Frequency in the Lord's Supper; whereas, I should humbly think, because it is so, and probably for this among other Reasons, because the Lord's Supper hath been abstained from; therefore let us again address ourselves vigorously to the Ordinance of God, and to this Ordinance of the Supper, that the Guards to it may, if possible, be restored.

For, in the first Place, can you think, Dear Sir, that the too much neglecting one Command will justify our superseding another? The Way how this Matter, at present, appears to me from the Word of God, is as follows: There are two Commands in the New Testament, *Do this in Remembrance of me*, and *Purge out the old Leaven*, both of them, doubtless, binding on Christians; and the Neglect of either criminal: But I do not see, that the Neglect of the last, or because others we are connected with neglect it more than they should do, can at all be a just Reason for our continuing in the Neglect of the other. The first Command here seems to be, *Do this*. This ought to be stedfastly continued in; and if we desire to be faithful as to Discipline, though others we are connected with are not so, or not so much as they should be, and we desire; yet are not we, by their culpable Remissness, loosed from our Obligation, to obey the Lord's Law about the Supper; the one is evil, as a Breach of a Commandment, the other worse, as the habitual Neglect of two. There are several Instances, I think, concerning this, in the Scriptures, directly in Point; the Church of *Corinth* we see very low and loose as to their Discipline; and the Apostle, for this great Evil, rebukes them; and, anxious for the Consequences, expostulates, *Know ye not that a little Leaven leavens the whole Lump?* as if he had said, the Neglect of this Ordinance of Discipline will be your Destruction. But, it is observable, though he reproves them for many Evils and Irregularities, and for some in this very Matter of the Lord's Supper too, appointing Discipline to be exercised on a very notorious wicked Person among them; yet this comes under no Reprehension, that they had not put a Stop to the Administration of the Supper, till even that Person was cast out, nor are the faithful Part of the Church, in that Division about him, reproved, because they had not abstained from that Command, of eating the Lord's Supper, till the other Command, about Discipline, had

women, Madams Gossin and Ferry, who had not subscribed; that is, who most solemnly before God had not renounced the Protestant and embraced the Popish religion, though at that time there were ten thousand Communicants in that City. This is not mentioned to upbraid that church, whose situation calls for so much sympathy, and so many prayers, but to let us see the true rock on which they split, that we may fear,

had been fully obtemperate as to him; nor does the Apostle give the most distant Hint, that they should suspend that Ordinance till they were as he would have them to be; and you see his Sentiments clearly are but indifferent enough about them still, 2 Cor. xii. 20, *etc.* though, no doubt, it was their Duty, from the Law he had just given to purge out the old Leaven, to be endeavouring it.—In like Manner, in the Churches in the *Revelation*, we find the Lord himself very angry, that they had with them such heinous Transgressors as are by him described; that they had not purged away such vile Leaven from them; yet is it not made a Charge against the so much commended Faithful, who, though sometimes very few, had to their Power withstood, but it seems had not prevailed to cast these gross Offenders out, that they had not abstained from obeying the Command in the Supper, even when these evil Persons were there, though it, doubtless, had been a great Burden to them. In this, then, there appears to be a real Distinction, namely, between the Duties that arise to Christians, from Christ's Laws about Discipline, which they should constantly fulfil, and the Duty of remembering Christ in his Supper, which, as first and principal, ought to be continued in, and not to be superseded, when Christians doing what they can in the other, cannot, in all Points, have Things as they think the Scripture says they should be, in the Churches they are Members of.—The Reasonings of Men are endless; Instances of Facts are surest; and it seems to be no small Illustration of this Sentiment, that, in all History, an Instance is not produced, in or near the Times of the Apostles, where any Body of the Faithful, in a Church, suspended their Communion in it, or divided altogether, because every Thing in Discipline was not as it ought to have been, though, we know, there is no Want of Instances of abundant Cause of Complaint, and Charge too, from him whose Eyes are as a Flame of Fire against Churches, for going in that Matter, far from his Law, and for which he justly threatened Ruin to them, even before he was done with speaking to them from Heaven by his Spirit in his Apostles.—Tho' therefore we never can be dissolved from our Obligation to fulfil Christ's Laws about Discipline, though our not fulfilling them is a great Offence in Christ's Eyes; though openly wicked Men are always Spots and Blemishes at Christian Feasts, and, when allowed, will bring down heavy Judgments, and though we ought ever to do what we can, to restore Discipline to Vigour, when in a languishing State; yet, from Examples in Scripture, it appears, its languishing State ought not to make Christians believe they are loosed from the Obligation, nor be a just Apology for their not actually obeying the Lord often, in remembering him in his Supper.

But, further, what hope we to do, by abiding in our present Situation? By the Complaints of the Decay of Religion, and the languishing State of Discipline, it would appear the present Method has not been very successful against these Evils, as that we should earnestly covet to abide in it, especially in Opposition to what is nearer the Laws of Christ; if we wish for reviving, how shall we expect that should do it, which has not kept us in Life? The Truth is, there seems to be many Causes concurring, that make us *ready to die*; and our Eyes must be to something else, than any outward Mean, to *strengthen what remains*: And, with regard to the present Alteration, were it made, I suppose it would be still as it is now, *i. e.* that careless Ministers and Christians would gain little Ground in Religion by it, as they gain little now; Prosperity in Religion depending on something else, than any outward Manner of enjoying the Means of Grace: And that, on the other Hand, these Servants *who stand in God's Council*, and desire to be faithful, as well as private Christians who are seeking his Face, as they are not now despised by the Lord, might also expect, in this Event, the more Countenance, Comfort, and Success, as they would oftner be in the Way of receiving, according to the Promises, such good Things from him.—And here I would only add to what was formerly said, that if there be any Mean on Earth by which Discipline might be retrieved, it is this; for where should it be expected to flourish, but where God has connected it even with his own Ordinances? And, as to this particular one, it must be said, that a Church and Worship, not excluding, surely, this material Part of it, the Lord's Supper, do, in their very Ideas, precede Discipline: Let us therefore, in the first Place, resolve to continue stedfastly in the assembling ourselves together, and often to remember our Lord's Death while we do so; and then, under a like Sense of Duty, be persuaded to exhort *and rebuke with all Long-suffering and Doctrine, to take heed of an evil Spirit of Unbelief, in departing from the living God, lest any Root of Bitterness trouble, and thereby many be defiled, looking diligently lest any Man fail of the Grace of God*; and if we thus make Use of the Fences which Christ hath planted about this Ordinance, we need have no Apprehensions of losing Solemnity, or making this high Action common, of Men's turning formal in the Use of it, or Religion's losing Ground, or languishing thereby: It is by neglecting these of Christ, and, in their Room, placing Guards of our own, that the Things we complain of shunning have entered: Nor can we ever truly expect to be delivered from them, but by embracing what we shun; for no Aphorism can be truer than this, *the Lord is with you, while you be with him; and if you seek him, he will be found of you; but, if ye forsake him, he will forsake you*.—In fine, with re-
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ward to this Objection, about the Fears of Want of Solemnity in the Lord's Supper, I conclude, fully agreeing to the Sentiments of a learned Person, "That if there be sufficient Warrant from Jesus Christ, and in the Scriptures, for frequent Communicating, it is, instead of being dutiful, sinful rather to fear, that our hearkening to Christ, in keeping close to his Institution, has a Tendency to lessen the Solemnity of it;" or, consequently, to occasion the Formality of Christians, or Decay of real Christianity.

Having so largely insisted on this, which I consider as the principal Objection, I shall be more concise on some others: If, then, it is further alleged, that God hath often given Countenance and Success to the Sermons preached with us at the Lord's Supper; and therefore it were a Pity to part with them. It were Answer enough, one should think, to this, to say, *That from the Beginning it was not so;* but, for Satisfaction, I would further reason thus, upon this Head: Preaching is God's Institution; he may bless it when he will; and that he hath often blessed it at Sacraments, should be both acknowledged, and he praised on that Account; but here is no Argument, nor is it possible there should be one, for the Continuance of all these Sermons, unless we will carry the Meaning of Preaching out of Season, so far, as by it, to shut out other Duties: But is there any thing less disputed than this, that one Duty should not shut out another? And when the Persons arguing on this Head, for our present Way, will allow, that because God hath blessed one in Prayer, therefore he should continue in Prayer, to the Neglect of hearing the Doctrine of the Apostles, we shall also yield, that because God hath blessed many Sermons at Sacraments, therefore we may justly continue these Sermons, though it makes the great Duty of remembering Christ's Death often utterly impracticable; and, we may certainly add, because none will dispute it, that, as the Lord hath blessed the frequent Ministration of his Supper, where no such Practice of multiplied Sermons hath attended it; (for, in all Antiquity, in all Protestant Nations, at our own Reformation, and downward, these were not;) Blessings, therefore, in that Ordinance, cannot be connected with them; so we have no Reason to fear, if these were superseded now, especially in the View of walking more diligently in all the Commandments of the Lord, that he would withdraw his Presence, or not bless his own People still, waiting on him in his own pure Appointment. It ought carefully, indeed, to be observed, that these Sermons are not wished away, because we would be quit of Sermons, or because, if the People think they are more edified by Preaching at these, than at other Times, either through their own Concern to be so, or Ministers greater Care, and the Lord's Blessing on both; that therefore we would deprive them of that Benefit, that were a most unjustifiable and

and a most unhappy Fobting to put this Desire upon. Let these Reasons of more Edification continue, and increase more and more, as nothing in this Proposal, I am sure, obstructs them. The just and only Motives of wishing an Alteration, as proposed, are the avoiding the Inconveniences that are in our present Way, as told in the *Glasgow* Overture, and the Access to a more frequent Engagement in another high Duty, which is now prevented; and these, or such Considerations, it is hoped, will satisfy every sober minded Person as to the Reasonableness of the Proposal in this Respect.

Others, I believe, are unwilling to give up our present Way, as that, they think, will rob them of the Fellowship of many Saints who, from other Places, attend their Churches at the Lord's Supper now: But tho' it might also be sufficient here to say, that the *Ephesians* did not come to *Philippi*, nor the *Philippians* to *Ephesus*, or any other Church, to refresh or be refreshed by one another at the Lord's Supper, yet, as I write every Thing freely, so I own there is something here with us very desirable, and which, as I wish, so I hope, will still be retained; there is I know not what Pleasure in seeing many Saints remembering the Lord's Death with us, we sharing in their Prayers, and entertaining in our Houses, it may be, Angels unawares.— But I must observe, that supposing this were in some Measure to be lost, by this Overture, yet if the Proposal itself is according to the Will of Christ, or more so than our present Way is, if upon the whole it is more for the Benefit and Comfort of Saints every where, I certainly, in Self-denial to my own Satisfaction, ought to yield to the general Good, else I prefer my own to Christ's Will, and a private to a public Spirit.— But this Consequence, I expect, will not follow upon the Proposal, for by an Amendment (to be mentioned afterwards) which, it is hoped, will be made in the *Glasgow* Overture at their next Meeting, the Act for four Times a Year, may be so framed, as not to exclude other Days of Communicating besides these four, nor to confine all to their Churches at all Times only, and so, that this desirable Thing, instead of being lost, may be rather obtained oftener than at present, for the Opportunities will be increased.— And lastly, though this Proposal may make your Communion Table thinner, through Want of some neighbouring Communicants, yet will it not decrease the Communion of Saints; it will rather give Occasion to dilate their Hearts more widely and frequently in all the Sympathy of Love and Prayer, when this very Frequency shall bring to constant Remembrance the State of all their Brethren, so often appearing before the Lord in this Ordinance. *If there be any Fellowship of the Spirit then, if any Bowels of Mercies, if any Comfort*

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in Love, this Joy with us will be oftener fulfilled, by our bearing on our Hearts before the Lord, the Cases of all the Saints, so often employed in this Action.—

Should any one say, that to do this at once, will be too great a Shock upon our People, who have been so long accustomed and are so much wedded to our present Forms, you may easily discern, that my Objection to this Overture would be of another Kind, viz. that instead of doing too much, we do a great deal too little at once; nor, were there Occasion, would I be at a Loss, from what has befallen several Protestant Churches, to shew, that their being too cautious in Reformation has proved, in many Respects, extremely hurtful to them, while they have never again been able to recover what they once had in View, coming near the Scripture; but to the present Case, I would particularly say, that to do Things by Halves, if ever we intend to go further, is only to make new Shocks; most of those who will be pleased at all, will be pleased at once; for it is Scripture and Reason which must determine the scrupulous to part easily with any Thing, and where these are hearkened to, the Bonds will soon be loosed: And here I cannot but throw in your Way, a noble Passage of the principal Instruments of our Reformation, which I find in their Preface to the Book of common Order: “Whatsoever, say they, is added to the Word of God, by Man’s Device, seem it never so good, holy, or beautiful, yet before our God, who is jealous, and cannot admit any Companion or Counsellor, it is evil, wicked, and abominable.—God—so direct our Hearts, with his holy Spirit, that we may not only content ourselves with his Wisdom, but rejoice in the same.”—And afterwards;—“But yet, for as much as there are some which, through Continuance in their Evil, rather delighting in Custom than Knowledge, cannot suffer that Men should once open their Mouths, against certain, old, and received Ceremonies, we thought good, in this Place somewhat to touch that Scrupulosity; for as Ceremonies, founded upon God’s Word, and approved in the New Testament, are commendable, as the Circumstance thereof doth support, so these that Man hath invented, tho’ he had never so good Occasion thereto, if they be once abused, import a Necessity, hinder God’s Word, or be drawn into Superstition, without Respect ought to be abolished.”—

This noble Passage, I acknowledge, was wrote at first with an Eye to the Popish Ceremonies, and therefore am very far from making a full Application of it to the present Subject; yet, as the Censure is expressed in general Propositions, and as Truth is of that Sterling Nature, that wherever it goes, it carries with it its intrinsic Value, there is no hindering the Application of this Passage,

Passage, as far as it is just, against any Addition to the Word of God, whether found with us or others, whether now or two hundred Years ago :— Nor can I, with all my Good-will and Prejudices to what is among us, keep my Mind from judging, that the Case of our added Days and Sermons to the Lord's Supper is met by that Rebuke of Mr. Knox, and the rest of our Reformers,— *So these that Man hath invented, tho' he had never so good an Occasion thereto, if they be once abused, import a Necessity, and hinder God's Word,—ought to be abolished.* Do we not find the Necessity? is not God's Word hindered? even this dying Word of Christ, to do this often to his Remembrance? As certainly, were it not for this, every Minister would find a Necessity upon his Mind, to administer the Lord's Supper oftener than once yearly. When therefore, if we were all of one Mind, this Passage would lead to another Thing than this Overture, can you hesitate a Moment what Judgment to give in a Proposal so vastly below what it ought to be?— But, which has the Advantage of giving Liberty and freer Course to a great Ordinance of the Gospel, now in some Respects in Bondage?

And as to the Disobligation of the People on this Account, I would say, that if we never reform in any Thing till, in so great a Multitude as are concerned here, none are disobliged, I would have us resolve never so much as to think of attempting a right Thing :— But the People, it is believed, will not be so apt to be disobliged, if they are left to their own impartial Thoughts. And here I cannot but express an earnest Desire, that Ministers would not be over-hasty in putting Prejudices in the Peoples Heads against this Proposal, till they have well-weighed and considered the Matter; neither according to their own Reasonings nor Prejudices, but in the Light of God's Word, and even according to the Light and Practices of all the Reformers abroad and at home. — Instances can too easily be given of putting Things into Peoples Heads too forwardly, which they who did, would willingly have undone, had it been in their Power, when Consequences followed they intended not, and could only lament when they could not prevent them.— This is not said either to reflect on those who, in the Integrity of their Heart, did such Things, or to restrain any hereafter from declaring to others what they think Truth, and necessary to be told : — But it certainly ought to go so far, as to be a just Reason of Caution to all, to examine well what, at least, has the Appearance of coming near the Will of God, before they throw out indigested Objections, which, clothed with their Authority, and meeting with Prejudices in weak and unthinking Minds, may ever after shut out a fair Hearing, even tho' themselves, who instilled them, after more deli-

deliberate Enquiry, were to intreat it.— How much wiser and better would it be for Ministers, after the most impartial, private Examination, in the first Place, to confer with one another, and see how near the Overture comes to the Truth, what Amendments are proper or necessary, how near others those who are divided in Sentiments can come, all determining against the least Seed of Division on such a Proposal? And if some that are least suspected, or more trusted by the People, in different Corners (being themselves satisfied) would take the Trouble of scattering some short Sheets among them, not to catch them with Guile, but to make the Truth of God manifest, to declare, that the proposed Alterations are intended for their Benefit:— And, in opening up the many Grounds and Advantages of this, to shew, that this is not to encourage Laziness in Ministers, but that a Subjection and greater Conformity to Christ's Will is aimed at.

Were such Things done, I am persuaded the Complaints would neither be many nor great.— If the People murmur at losing the Fast-Day, may it not be told them, what hinders the Preparation from being a Fast-Day? The Overture allows it: Instead of one therefore there may be many. If it is answered, That robs us still either of a Preparation or Fasting-Day, cannot they be desired calmly to reflect, that their own Practice, as well as higher Motives, leads to this Alteration? For, is there one of a hundred, who thinks it necessary to the being at the Lord's Table, that they should attend on a Fast Day, if it is not in their own Parish? why will they be angry then at but one Preparation Day, when themselves make use, except once a Year, of no more, tho' they should communicate twenty Times?— And the less Reason surely have they to be angry at the removing this (by themselves neglected) Day, when, in its Room, they will be allowed that oftener, which they ought, and seem to love more, the Lord's Supper itself.

And if the Seceders are disposed to make a Handle, what will they say? Will all *their Wit* turn this into a plausible, not to say a just Cause of Secession? Their Guides among them, then, must be very artful, or the People they lead very blind: For, what can be insisted on hence to the Advantage of their Cause, if the Word of God be not confessedly thrown away? This is not like many other Points of their Dispute, which the Scriptures have not a Word about, and which therefore they can affirm is agreeable to it, as fast as others can deny it, but which indeed, if ever I read the Scriptures with any Understanding, the Salvation of a lost Soul, by Jesus Christ, has no Sort of Concern in; but this is a Point the Word of God hath given explicate Declarations about, and to which, for my Part, I shall freely confess, that this Overture

is far from coming up to : But, will any Seceder set his Face to it, that this is a less scriptural Way that is now proposed, than either theirs or ours at present ?— Will they paint it as a Cause of Secession, that we are coming back to the Practice of the Reformers, after a Defection from it ?— that we are subjecting ourselves to the Acts of covenanting Assemblies, even to these of the purest Years of the purest Times, 1638 and 1645 ? This would destray the whole Foundations of their own Testimony ; nay, it would be easy to retort such Objections upon themselves, if they or their People will hearken to any Thing that is reasonable, *viz.* that if they are sincere in their Professions, of desiring to come up to the Attainments of covenanting Times, here is not a single but repeated Act of these Times, that they ought to conform to, unless they will say that this was not a desirable nor scriptural Thing among us at that Time. But, as it is injurious to Men to lay to their Charge an evil or absurd Thing, before they have done it, I should rather think it fitting to beg Pardon of the Seceders, for supposing they would be so unreasonable, than to make it a Reason against doing a scriptural Thing, that the Seceders will make a Handle of it, than which few Imputations can be harsher : Besides, it is thought they have enough ado among themselves, as indeed it is likely they ever will have, where a Difference in every Punctilio creates a new Secession. But let this be as it will, the Answer to all such Things is, if we are attempting a Conformity to the Will of God, and taking every prudent Step to farther it, we ought to commit the Events to him.—

As I would pass over no Objection I know of, so I have heard it insinuated, that if this Overture takes Place, Ministers shall then want an Excitement they now have to Diligence in composing their Sermons with Care, as it has been observed, that not a few use more Freedom at home, and studied with more Accuracy for the Occasions of Preaching at the Lord's Supper.— To this we would first say, as upon a former Head, that Ministers will still have many such Excitements, and that with greater Advantage to themselves and others, as these will be scattered thro' the whole Year, instead of being confined to one Season of it as now.— Again, If there be Ground for this Suspicion, do you not imagine a former Complaint has also its Influence here, *viz.* that it not being Sacrament Day, nor near it, the Minds even of Ministers are relaxed in the Service of God, and a greater Indifference therefore, if you will allow the Expression, a Commonness of Spirit, prevails in other Sabbaths ; so that their Ministrations are ordinarily liker the dead Exercises of mere Gifts, than the awakened Exercises of Grace : What the Occasions and Remedies

are of such an Evil, I need not again enlarge upon, having already touched on this, on the second Advantage of this Proposal.—And if after all, the Carelessness of Ministers shall be complained of, and if it is come to this, that such a Thing, our Way of the Sacrament, is needful to stir up to ministerial Diligence in Preaching, as I should think the Excitements arising from that Quarter, no very likely Mean to restore it in general, and all that is done there but a poor Relief under such an Evil, so should I be straitened what farther Remedy to think of in such a Case, except the praying to the Lord of the Harvest to send forth more faithful Labourers.

I need not, I hope, add a Word about the Expence, as an Objection; it is our present uncommanded Method occasions Expence, not the Lord's own Institution: What truly belongs to that, the poorest Church of Christ was never at a Loss to supply; and of this the Assembly, 1638, had a just View, as you may observe by looking to the *Glasgow Overture*, or the Abridgement of the Acts of Assembly.

After having gone through the Objections, either material, or more showy and catching, as I have heard them (and there may be others I have not,) I should put an End to this Trouble, were it not for the Necessity I find myself under, to mention an Amendment of the *Glasgow Overture*, lately hinted at, which I wish were made at their next Meeting on their present Overture, *viz.* that instead of the Lord's Supper being administered in all the Parishes of the same Presbytery, *at least in one Day*, they will leave that to the Direction of Presbyteries: One can easily discern, by other Paragraphs, what it was disposed the Synod to this Clause, *viz.* the putting a Stop thereby to the needless Gatherings of Hearers from a Neighbourhood; but I should hope they would readily go into the proposed Amendment, when they reflect, that other Methods may be fallen upon to answer this Design, and that several great Inconveniencies must follow on this Clause of the Overture's remaining as a Part of it. For, if it should,

1. The very good Intention of a former Paragraph in this Overture would be frustrated, where the four Times yearly are allowed, and more frequently appears agreeable to it, by the added Words, *at least*; yet, upon the Matter, this last Clause will prevent that greater Frequency; for, unless the general Appointment is oftener, it can hardly be expected, that even the most devout could go to another Presbytery to procure it.

2. In Fact, this would be a real and sensible Loss to many Christians in *Scotland*, who make a Shift now, tho' inconveniently, to communicate oftener than four Times a Year; an unde-

niable Instance of this is about *Edinburgh*; in which City and Suburbs, including *Leith*, if I mistake not, there are ten or eleven Opportunities which the Christians there embrace often, for eating the Lord's Supper. In many other Places of *Scotland*, more than four Times a Year are put in the Way of the Lord's People to communicate, and which not a few lay hold on: What a Hardship then would it be, that the truly hungry should be robbed of so many Meals, in this View only, that Numbers that will not eat may not be gathered, when the Purpose of not gathering them can be otherwise answered?

3. This Clause seems inconsistent with the fundamental Right, which hath been acknowledged to belong to each several Congregation of Christians since the Reformation, to assemble together when they see fit to eat the Lord's Bread: That it could not be otherwise, I might abstractly reason from the Principles of the Reformers, but without this, we see it explicitly in their public Acts: Thus, in *the first Book of Discipline*, Chap. xi. Par. 5. four Times a Year are mentioned, and the Days named, while we are made to understand, that one great Reason of *distinguishing these Days* is to repress Superstition, *i. e.* to carry the People off from the unscriptural Holidays: It is fully and fairly added, "But any several Kirk, for reasonable Causes, *may change the Time, and may minister oftener.*" So also, in *the Book of common Order*, it is said, "The Day when the Lord's Supper is ministered, which is commonly used once a Month, or *so oft as the Congregation shall think expedient.*" And of this truly Christian Privilege, every Congregation in *Scotland* has been in intire, unfringed, and uninterrupted Possession ever since.

And though, in an abstract Argument, it is acknowledged, that it may not seem to follow, that because four Times yearly are appointed to Presbyteries to have the Lord's Supper, therefore it cannot be oftener administered among them, nor in any single Congregation within their Bounds; I say, tho' in strict Argument it might be a Dispute whether this was a just Consequence, yet, I dare say, in Fact it would be found, that hastily it would not be oftener appointed by Presbyteries; and that if any single Minister, tho' from the purest Views, were to attempt the Lord's Supper oftener, he would run a mighty Risk of finding, not only all the Load of the Reproaches of Singularity, *etc.* lying on him, but that Clause, *and that it should be administered in all the Parishes of a Presbytery, in the same Sabbath at least*, interpreted against him, and he either brought to desist, or incur Admonition and Censure: Excuse me here, Sir, for this Fear, but I have so got it in my Head, that that Thing *Uniformity*, especially in unscriptural Matters, is so adored by Church-men, and according

ing to the wise forecited Words of our Reformers, so imports a Necessity, and hinders God's Word from having a free Course, that I cannot but be jealous of any Approach to it, except in the most laudable and necessary Instances; and you would wonder how a Coward meets with Things to confirm his Fears, but I have met with an Example which had that Effect fully on me. You remember all the Declarations of the Church of France, as to their Sentiments about the Frequency of the Lord's Supper, and the Invitations they had for it from the Example of the Primitive Church, etc. yet at the Synod of Orleans, in Chap. iii. under this comfortable Title, *Discipline upon Delinquents*, Sect. 4. you find this surprizing Decree, "Whereas our Brother, the Minister of *Varrennes* in *Picardy*, doth minister the Lord's Supper every Month, the Council doth advise, that our Brother of *Montmoſor*, do admonish him, in the Council's Name, to follow the general Practice of the Churches, that so there may be no Diversity amongst us, and our Uniformity preserved." Here is the Idol! Uniformity! to which the Laws of Christ must cede, and the poor Minister of *Varrennes* bow! If he had been obeying Christ in ministring the Lord's Supper oftner, he must have been a greater Delinquent. But whether, Dear Sir, are you filled with more Indignation at the Synod, or Compassion to the Minister? What if he had been refractory, and spoke of the Will of Christ, and the Preferableness of obeying God rather than them, and had cited their own Canon as one of the Things that had led him to his Knowledge and Practice in that Matter? What must have been the Consequence?—This, however, points out another Reason for an Alteration in this Clause, as it upon the Matter takes away the valuable Privilege from every Christian Congregation of eating the Lord's Supper whenever they are so minded. And,

4. These Reasons produce another, namely, that because of them many Ministers, otherwise much for the Proposal, will be against it; many who are willing to keep within all Bounds of Decency with Regard to public Rules, yet dare not give up their own and their Congregation's Liberty, in this material Point:—To avoid therefore a wrong Thing it will be just to alter this Clause, and to avoid an Opposition to the whole Design on this Account, it will be prudent. How much better will it be to leave it on the Footing of the Book of Discipline, before mentioned? Then it may be agreed in Presbyteries (of which prudent Intention we have some Pattern in the Act of *Edinburgh* Presbytery, 1720, concerning the Sacrament's being in every Month of the Year in their Bounds) to throw their whole Congregations into three different Classes, and these not lying together, but

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scattered rather through all the Bounds, that so some in each Class, in every Corner, may have the Lord's Supper in every Month, and that too in different Days of it; and so as in a Presbytery of twelve Congregations, at four Times each, the Lord's Supper will be dispensed Forty-eight Times among them all: It may be so ordered, as that at some one Place or other, the Sacrament would be almost on every Sabbath of the Year, and so (however far short this be of the Scripture Way) yet would it be much preferable to the present Method, and the Design of the Act of Assembly 1711, instructing Presbyteries to have the Lord's Supper in the several Months of the Year, would be well answered.—And thus might every devout Person, without Inconvenience, communicate often, and the little needful Help procured in a Neighbourhood, and without any of that Confusion which should justly be avoided, special Provisions may be made in a peremptory Way, against employing a next Neighbour, where a Supply is not provided, and the Certification in case of Transgressions strong; for though it does not seem consistent with the Liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, that Ministers or Christians should be limited in their Obedience to his Commands, and so not in the often eating of his Supper; yet may it be lawful for a Church to lay under what Restrictions she sees expedient, Ministers, who are bound to feed their own Flocks, from departing from them without just Cause; and which, in the present Case, they may determine in, according to their Wisdom, that all Things may be done, concerning this Ordinance, with Decency and Order.

If at this Time, then, we cannot come nearer the Scripture Account of this Institution, let our old Acts and Customs be revived; how we fell from them may be easily accounted for; such a Method as our present, you may believe, could never be deliberately framed in any Christian Constitution of a Church, where the Bible was open before those who thought on it, “so seldom, with so many Sermons and Days, instead of a greater Frequency without them;” nor was it so devised with us. Our Settlement at the Reformation we have seen in another Way; but when great Unfrequency in the *Episcopal* Times, from 1605,—1638, prevailed, the devout People coming from far to such Occasions, where godly Ministers were, naturally produced Sermons on the Week Days. The famous Story at the Kirk of *Shotts* is an Illustration of this; after the Restoration, Persecution came; and when once, in many Years, in some Desert or Mountain, the Lord's People, by Stealth, could come at this Feast, a Multitude of Sermons was the Consequence; and these being the Days of Tribulation too, they fasted; and thus the Lord's Supper among us fell into Connections with Things in themselves good, but
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which originally were neither appointed, nor are necessary to it, Things in the Times described proper, but now improper, as hindering what the Lord intended, a Frequency of Administration. If then, Rarity of the Lord's Supper, and Hardship, led us into our present Way, let Frequency in this Ordinance, and Quietness, lead us out of it; some of these very Men that were joyfully engaged in these lengthened Services under Persecution, concurred in Alterations, when they were at Rest; four Times since the Revolution have our Assemblies attempted this in general Acts, viz. 1701. 11. 12. 24. But Customs, and the Traditions of the Fathers, have hitherto hindered a Return to our first Degree of Simplicity; in Consequence of these indeed, and no doubt of Convictions from the Truth itself, many have exhorted to Frequency in this Ordinance, and complained of the prevailing Defect of it among us. — Others who, as their Writings near thirty Years ago could be in no Prospect of this Proposal, so the most jealous of the People will not suspect them of being in Concert, or of a Party, to rob them of their Privileges, have wrote about it. Let Mr. *Willison's* Sacramental Directory and Catechisms be only consulted in this View. — And a very few in Country Parishes (while some considerable Burghs have the Sacrament but once yearly to this Day) have had this Ordinance twice yearly, two in *East Lothian*, and one in the North Parts of *Fife*. One need not be ashamed of their Names, Mr. *Alston* at *Dirleton*, now dead, Mr. *Lundie* at *Salton*, Mr. *Smibert* at *Kilmenie*, are all I ever heard of in *Scotland*; but, however others, in Words, have approved the Ministers that attempted this; for such a Thing with us may be called an Attempt, it is so singular; yet they have been so ill seconded by their Neighbours, as absolutely shews the Vanity of their Hopes, who would look for any general Alteration upon our present Footing. Were there no other Reason for the Certainty of this, the very needless, but in our present Way, the necessary Expence attending the Ministration, must for ever put a Stop to a greater Frequency, as few Ministers, would be able to bear it.

The Difficulties, indeed, we find in compassing so small a Reformation, shewing us how hard it is, to get free from unscriptural Customs, when they are once allowed to obtain even among Protestants, should make us extremely careful in any new Regulations, to keep every Thing loose that may still remain with us, without Foundation in the Word. The Truth should be declared fully, according to the Scriptures, that the Door may open, and no Restraints from our Rules, if ever, in Mercy, God shall raise among us a Spirit for future Reformation; and, in the mean Time, it should be declared, that Presbyteries and Ministers are so far from being confined to four Times yearly, that not only, according

to the old Rules, they may *minister often*, but that it is agreeable to the Judgment of the Church, that Presbyteries and Ministers should more frequently obey this comfortable Command of Christ, so they keep within the Bounds of prescribed Decency.

Thus, Dear Sir, with that Freedom which belongs to the Letters of Friends, and unfeigned Ingenuity, which becomes the Truths of Christ, have I represented to you some Things which have occurred to me upon a Proposal, which I cannot but approve of in our present Situation, and about which my greatest Regret is, that it is not higher and nearer that Command to which it points at a Subjection; if it is good to obey it at all, why not to its full Extent? if it was right to do so of old, why not now? —More Time, and more Access to Books, had probably produced you more Trouble; but knowing about this Time you must enter into the Consideration of this Matter in the Judicatories to which you belong, I could not detain this longer. If, such as it is, (as observed in the Beginning) it informs you of any Thing you had not before attended to, or sets you on a more accurate Inquiry yourself, I shall be pleased, as I am sure, in that Event, you will be also.—The undoing wrong Things which have crept into Societies, is a Work neither easy nor pleasant; not Choice, but Necessity, forces to that Labour; and little is the Progress that is ordinarily made this Way, where the Societies are religious.—Men loving Ease in Religion, chuse Superstition, and Mens Inventions, rather than the pure Will of God, Perhaps a Cause which has its Relation to this, does not altogether want its Share in the Difficulty that is found in the present Proposal; for though it may seem otherwise, yet, on a just Comparison, it would be found there is a great Difference, as to Ease, between even our present seemingly burdensome Manner, as to the Lord's Supper, and the more self-denying Methods of the purer Institution, and that Diligence and regular well-tempered Discipline, which we have seen the Scripture connects it with, and which indeed we, and all foreign *Protestants*, made at the Beginning a positive Part of our Reformation from *Popery*.—No Body either can be so blind, as not to see, that though the present Proposal goes on, nay, though a much better Thing, even following the Lord fully, by communicating every Sabbath Day, were among us, that that of itself would not be sufficient, either to revive or hold us up in Religion: The Decay of Religion in these *Protestant* Churches, who had what we are wanting, nay, the Degeneracy of Churches in antient Times, when in the fullest Possession of all the holy Commandments of Christ, shews the Vanity of any such Hope; for, supposing we had these in their Perfection now, as others had them before, and all the Gifts a Church could desire

desire with them, *that still were but the Sinews and the Flesh, with the Skin, came upon the Bones; till the Breath came, we could not live, nor stand upon our Feet*, and, after it did come, might again be sinned away by us. All these Things, in themselves, cannot make us better; they only put us in the Way of being so, if we improve them: To think otherwise than this of Ordinances, would be to place them in the Room of Grace, instead of considering them, as they are, only Means of conveying it; as to think of obtaining Grace without these Means, or by other Methods than he hath appointed, is little less than changing the Councils of God, and being wiser than he.—And the present Alteration is desired in no other Way, than more frequent Prayers and Praises would be, were our Worship as defective in regard to them, as it is now with respect to the Lord's Supper: But, in pleading on this Supposition, for the Frequency of these, no Man would insist, that were such Desire obtained, it would preserve us from Apostasy; but only, that in that Case, public Worship would be nearer the divine Appointment, and the Means of Grace more compleat. At this present Time we have these Ordinances of Praise and Prayer as fully as the antient Churches had; but these save us not from Degeneracy, because we improve them not, and other Means of Salvation, as we ought: In like Manner, if a more scriptural Way about the Lord's Supper obtains, that may not, and will not deliver us, if unimproved also, from many Symptoms sadly and plainly expressive of a melancholy Consumption, as to *the Power, nay, even as to the Form of Godliness among us*, nor stop our growing Evils, for which, in HIS Time, Christ may spew us out of his Mouth.

But if this should happen, under this Alteration, it could not justly be accounted the Cause, as, coming nearer Christ's Truth neither was, nor will ever be a Cause of Provocation to him, tho' the Misimprovement of every good Thing must; yet, as has been hinted before, the Fear of this last Evil can never justify our abstaining from the Advantage of any Mean of Grace, or any Degree of it: On the contrary, if in this Instance we come nearer Christ's Will, we shall so far act as to please him; and, in desiring to fulfil his Will, we should trust him with the Consequences; neither Dangers nor Difficulties are Reasons for not obeying Christ; if he commands the Course, so we keep it, let him answer for the Issue; and *what Iniquity have the Fathers found in him?* Let us then have done with fruitless Wishes and Complaints about the Unfrequency of the Lord's Supper; and, instead of crying about Difficulties in the Way, let us remove such of them as are in the Power of our Hand, and, according to Christ's Will,

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move forward, expecting Help from him, and his Blessing on our Handy-work, for the Ends of Salvation to many.

In fine, let it be considered, that here is a Proposal of real Importance; a Proposal about one of the two positive Institutions of Christ, and, of the two, the most comfortable and distinguishing one, wherein Christians are often called to be engaged, and where the Influence is most diffusive, now with us, in some Measure, misunderstood, and in a great Measure unpractised. An Alteration, then, here to the Advantage might be called Reformation, a scriptural and a valuable one.

Let it be further remembered, that this is not a Point of doubtful Disputation, but clear in the Scriptures, made sure by all Antiquity, and acknowledged by all understanding thoughtful Moderns. How it came into Disuse and Obscurity; what awful Purposes the Misunderstanding and Neglect of it, in the righteous Judgment of God, served in Men apostatizing to Superstition and Idolatry; what Light our Reformers had in this Matter; what Sense of its Importance and Necessity, though, alas! in Practice, they fell short; how, even from them, we have gone backward; how many the Advantages; how ill-grounded the Objections are against a Reformation here, we have in some Measure seen; and much more might have been said. What, then, can hinder our Compliance with this Design, if not our desiring to carry it much farther? Why will we not add to *Faith Virtue*, and to *Virtue Godliness*?

Again, let it be attended to, that here is no Opinion or Practice of a particular Sect; nor is it connected with the distinguishing Tenets of any, no more than the Lord's Supper itself is, or Praying, or Praising, or doing either of them often.—Separate from each, from all Peculiarities of Men, it stands grounded on the indisputed Will of Christ; if any (as People of most Persuasions vary in their Practice here) are more frequent in Subjection to this Command than others, it is not because the Principles of these others lead them to a less stedfast Continuance in it than theirs do; for, besides what I have already shewn, I should be at no Loss to bring you Men of every Denomination of *Protestants*, of the same Sentiments in this Matter, and *Presbyterians* at home and abroad, as well as others. And if in Practice we have fallen short of all, or of our own Principles, what remains, but that from henceforth we should live more up to them?

It may be added, that this Proposal is made so low, not only vastly lower than the Truth itself, but lower than all other *British Presbyterians* practise it; nay, so low, that even these who breathe after the *Jewish* outward Solemnity in Worship, can make no reasonable Objection to it; three Times a Year they had, from the Beginning, Appointments for extraordinary Feasts and Service; and another Feast

was afterwards added in *Winter*, at the Dedication of the second Temple, whereat Christ attended; so that four Times yearly were their Extraordinaries. And if any still insist, that, for the more Solemnity, the Supper should be in Churches but once yearly, they seem tacitly to think it had been at least as well, if there had been no Appointment of an extraordinary Feast and Service, to the *Jewish* People, but the Passover only.

And, if without Offence (as none is designed) it may be said, this is, at least, among other Proposals at present, a *Christian* one; for, if so much hearty and persevering Zeal appears in some Affairs; and cold Indifference in this, would we not be exposed to a severe Application of *Phil. ii. 21. For all seek their own Things, not the Things which are Jesus Christ's.*

And then this Proposal tends so remarkably, to the real and practical Advantage of Christians, that our naturally caring for their State, loudly calls for a Concern about it at our Hands. To think otherwise of this Institution, would be to charge the Author of it with making it in vain; but all Christians allow this, that to receive the Lord's Supper becomingly, is of the highest Use to them; and if Increase of Knowledge or Grace be advantageous, this Ordinance, leading so remarkably to both, must be very useful? Here, if any Place, the boundless unsearchable Mystery of the Father, and of Christ, is displayed.—Here Faith, Love, and Hope, have wide and endless Scope; from whence also, but from this Place, is it, that Christians best learn to fear the Lord? where the Bitterness of Death, even in the Son of God, because of Sin, is beheld; and at what Well shall they draw Waters of Consolation, but at this? *for in it they are all made to drink into one Spirit.* When shall they so properly draw nigh with holy Boldness, laying hold on Mercy, devoting themselves, and asking Grace, under the Covert of Blood, as here, where that Blood is represented, *etc. etc.*?—Here, then, is Edification the most perfect; and, if duly used, the most unfailing Mean of it; why, then, afford it so seldom? Why are we unlike him that appointed it, who gives so liberally, so unweariedly?—The Souls of the Saints too witness against our Way, by their crying for this Ordinance, again and again, whenever they are revived under it; *Evermore, say they, give us this Bread.*

Nay, more, the Voice of this Proposal is not only for what to Christians is useful, but for what is their Glory; for, if the Cross of Christ is their Glory, this which shews it forth, is so to be accounted, as this is connected with it; that which the World despises, and God approves, is in this Ordinance, the Death of Christ, as saving dead and lost Men: And herein, therefore, should Christians often display their Banner, and often tell the

*Prayers of
Grace*

World, that in this Cross alone they glory before God; and by this alone is the World crucified to them, and they to the World; that in vain they have sought Peace and Holiness elsewhere; here only they have found these Treasures.—— Why then should Christians be ashamed of their Hope, or seem to conceal it, as only flowing from the Cross of Christ, by their seldom appearing at this Ordinance, where it is set forth? Surely they have no Cause of blushing, but of boasting rather, and rejoicing in it, before all Sorts of Men.—Have the Selfish such substantial Treasures, in all their Labour and Searches? Let them bring forth their Acquirements of whatever Kind, and add to the Sum their flattering Hopes or more boundless Wishes, and weigh them with the Christian's Hundred Fold in this World, and in the World to come, Life everlasting, that springs to Christians from this Cross, and at this Supper is felt or fore-tasted by them, and the other light Scale shall fly up as empty.—Nor before the Men of Wisdom, and the Disputers of this World, need Christians blush, though every first Day of the Week, by breaking Bread, they tell their Faith, and Love, and Hope, are in a crucified Lord.—Have the Men, speaking high Things about the Dignity of human Nature, any Thing to produce in all the Acts or Honours of it they can recount, like what is here? where, with the Representation indeed of God's staining the Pride of all Man's glorying, in the Judgment displayed against his Sin in the Humiliation of Christ, an Exaltation of our Nature is discerned (and with that Humiliation connected) to Dignity inexpressible in the Person of Jesus Christ, and in him, and with him, to all his believing Brethren, and infinitely beyond whatever Eye saw, or ever vain Man conceived in all his Pride of Fancy.—Have the Men, trusting in their own Well-doing, such a Thing to boast of before God, as Christians have here? where beholding also, that God will by no Means clear the Guilty, that when he marks Iniquity, none can stand, they yet see that here is a Work of Righteousness, in Obedience to the highest, hardest possible Command, even the becoming a Curse, spotless, perfect, and finished, an Obedience worthy for God to delight in, as the brightest Glass of his own Holiness and Glory; to reward, by bestowing on him, *that learned, though a Son, such Obedience, all the Fulness of Joy*, and to accept, as Righteousness, for the chiefest Sinners, while, in so doing, he is just, and justified in passing different Sentences, on Men connected or unconnected with it, even to a whole Eternity of Wrath or Joy, while in the Judged, compared and in equal Balances weighed together, from their own personal Characters for good and evil Qualities and Works, (so imperfect and evil are the best, and so many desirable Things are with the worst) a Foundation

might

might not possibly be found, before a righteous Judge, for a Difference as to such Suffering, or Happiness, for a Space beyond the little Span of Life, which both were tried in. *In this, then, wherein all the House of Israel are justified, let them glory.*—Have the Admirers of Reason such an Object, in all their Researches, to approve of? Here is the Fitness of Things, in the highest Instance, in the Punishment of Guilt, and in the Death of Christ, and on his enduring it, in setting the Guilty free, while his admirable and unspotted Conduct, in his own Person, according to the Fitness of untainted Rectitude, and eternal Reason, is gloriously rewarded. Have the Men of Liberty and Will, in all their Ranges, such a View, or such high Acts of this darling Power, as are to be beheld at the Lord's Table? Here indeed the Abuse of this boasted Excellency is seen in the Bitterness of the Death of Christ, for us who chose to sin; but, at the same Time, the highest, freest, and most sovereign Acts of it, in the Will of the Father, chusing and sending his Son to redeem Men, and of the Son, in saying, *Lo! I come*; and in both proclaiming, *Whosoever will, let him come*; while the delivered Captives, in all the unreserved, unlimited, determined Energy of Freedom, shew the first Act of their glorious Liberty by the Spirit, in echoing back the Voice, *Behold we come unto thee*; while at this Table they profess to bring every Thought into Subjection to him, *who of his own Will hath begotten them to be his First-born.*—Have the Lovers of moral Beauty such an Object among all they admire?—Let Beauty be defined as they please, Uniformity amidst Variety, and Benevolence its Height and Glory. Let it be true, “That when every several Effect
“ has its several particular Cause; this gives no Pleasure to the
“ Spectator, as not discovering Contrivance; but that Work is
“ only beheld with highest Admiration and Delight, as the Result
“ of deep Council, which is complicated in its Parts, yet simple
“ in its Operations, where a great Variety of Effects are seen to
“ arise from one principal operating Uniformity.”—And shall there be in all the Expansion of Thought an Object so glorious as in the displayed Love and Righteousness of the Gospel, collected, and in one View set forth in the Lord's Supper?—Let all the moral Sense, dilated, refined, and heightened, assisted also by every Power and Aid, be invited to form the Judgment; let the Features be marked, the Proportions observed, and then let it be said, if the Result be not perfect Beauty.—Was ever Love so commended as the Love of the Father? or ever Grace like that of the Son displayed? Millions most unworthy are here embraced, the Friendless befriended, the Helpless helped, the Lost found, the Dead restored to Life eternal: Let all other Things called Beauties fade before this, or be its Shadows; and let all that have
moral

moral Sense to approve, or Hearts to wonder and love, or Tongues to praise, bring here these Powers, and employ them on the best Occasion; and let real Christians glorying in the Cross of Christ, as *all* to them, often tell they do so, by eating this Supper. X

If you say, Dear Sir, this is an Excursion, and number it among the many Faults of this Letter, forgive it, I pray you, and call it a Fault of Fancy, as I have purposely committed it: For observing, not without Surprize, in these Days, many who would be thought wiser than the Gospel can make them, disconcerted and wandering in Science, while, in their own Wisdom, they would build their Foundations of Happiness on the Perfection of every detached Principle of human Nature, while in a crucified Lord little Form or Comeliness is discerned, tho' all these Principles together in their due Place and Order, are only to be beheld, collected, centring, shining, and ballanced in that Recovery, which, by his Death, he hath purchased for our lost Natures:—Nor beholding, without Indignation, many, tho' still naming the Name of Christ, yet giving but too shrewd Grounds of Suspicion of their having erred in their own Wisdom from the Simplicity that is in him, and from his Cross being the only Wisdom and Power of God to save, by their Contempt of the Means of his Grace and Salvation; and the Neglect of this one in particular, I could not, in recommending a Proposal for more frequent communicating, help telling, that Christians, from the Disputes of the wise, and the Neglect of the foolish, have no Reason to be ashamed of a frequent Appearing at the Lord's Table; for as the *Truth* is with them, and they have more Reason to glory in this, which the World despises, even where their own Wisdom would seem to excel, than the World have in all they boast of, so for this Reason, because in the World's Eyes, the Cross of Christ and his Table is contemptible, should they take Pleasure to distinguish themselves in a more frequent Remembrance of the one, by a more frequent Appearance at the other, saying, *If this is to be vile, they are determined to be more vile.*

Last of all, I would add concerning this Overture, that if any Season could be thought proper for attempting such a Thing, this is it; for though no Time can properly be wrong for doing good, yet are there some Seasons wherein the most fearful and indolent are called to Action; and surely this is such a Time. Again, hath the Lord given us Rest from our Enemies? and, what should a Church do in the Days of Rest, but walk in the Fear of the Lord, and the Comforts of the Holy Ghost, and be edified? But in what Way is that to be expected, but by being found in all the Ordinances of the Lord blameless? And when the

the Lord at such a Time as this, lengthens out our Tranquility, and allows our *Table to be covered*, shall we not often eat at it? This shall be more acceptable than the Fat of Rams, and more so than our former unhappy *biting and destroying one another*; and in some Sense too this Time gives us an Opportunity of turning Evil into Good. It is thought, in our late Schism, that in general many of the warmer but weaker have gone off, and the more wise and solid Professors of Religion have staid: The Secession, therefore, as it hath carried off many of such as were serious (and therefore not to be despised, as no little one of Christ should) but apt however to look to the Traditions of the Fathers, in the Ordinances, as much as to the purer Commandment of the Scriptures; so this gives the fairer Prospect of persuading such as remain, to look singly to the written Word for the Will of God in this Matter, and us to tell them, *Why do ye not of yourselves judge what is right? we speak unto wise Men, judge you what we say.*

To conclude, We have seen the Will of God in this Matter, and Man's Deviation from it, in the Days of Ignorance; and when the Days of Light are again come, why should not the Light undo what Darkness did? Or is it needful, because by Degrees Antichrist brought down this Ordinance, that by Degrees we should measure back his Steps of Apostasy? Why not all at once? or, why find we it so hard at least to make a fair Beginning? or rather being once begun, why have we fallen back again? or having fallen back, why are we obstinate against Recovery? Surely this is the first Generation that ever reasoned against having the Lord's Supper often; even the Church in its antient Apostasy, spoke not thus, but often otherwise, tho' indeed they made Antichristian Uses of that guilty Sloth they could not conquer: Is this Opposition then, or any Cause for it, a Token for Good to us? Surely, were I to be positive about any one future Thing, in this I would be confident, that *when, or wherever*, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who walketh in the midst of the Golden Candlesticks, and holds the Stars in his Right-hand, shall intend a Revival of his Work in the Midst of the Years, there will be from him, a Direction and over-ruling to these Means he hath himself appointed, for the conveying of his and his Father's Grace, by his Spirit, to Men, and particularly to this great, and since the Church's last Deliverance from Darkness, too much neglected Ordinance, *the continuing stedfastly in the breaking of Bread*, when the Glory of the later Day shall come, and the set Time to favour; this waste Place of Sion shall surely be rebuilt: And what should we do till these happy Days, but lay hold on every fair Occasion to further them? At this present Time
then,

then, let us give our Approbation to this, or, if it could obtain, to a better Overture; this is far from what should be wished for or wanted; but we know who despises not a Day of small Things, and in every View it were unjustifiable in us to do it. Who knows what small Things, well intended, well followed out, the Lord may make the Beginning of better and nobler ones, or how he may make them useful, and subservient to them? And for this, let many Prayers be added, that God would strengthen *the Things that remain and are ready to die*, that he would soon melt our *Hills*, and make his Mountains flow at his Presence; and that, when all Things are according to his own Pattern, he would create upon every Dwelling-place in Mount Sion, and upon her Assemblies, a Cloud, and Smoke by Day, and the shining of a flaming Fire by Night, that upon all the Glory may be a Defence.

I am,

with unfeigned Affection,

Dear Sir,

Yours, etc.

P O S T.

P O S T S C R I P T.

MR. *Erskine's* Paper having come to my Hand, and thereby observing the Opposition to this Design, flowing, in a great Measure, from mistaken Apprehensions, as if it were taking away what had been useful to Religion in *Scotland* in former Times; and as nothing can be properer to remove such a Mistake, than the real History of our present Sermons and Days, I shall endeavour to throw what Light I can upon this Matter from the Beginning.

I dare not be positive, whether from the Reformation, and fifty Years after it, there were any Sermons before or after the Day of the Lord's Supper; tho' this we know, from the Order of the first Book of Discipline, and otherwise, that no Minister assisted his Neighbour on these Occasions: The Instance of Mr. *Robert Bruce*, when a Preacher, serving the Tables in one of the Churches of *Edinburgh*, on the Minister's stepping aside, is a Proof of this.

In Time of the first prevailing of Episcopacy, from 1610 to 1638, the Episcopal Clergy appear to have been negligent in the Ministration of this Ordinance.

During that Time, the Ministers, zealous for Presbytery, were also zealous for Frequency of the Lord's Supper, and to their Sacraments did the Professors of Religion resort from very different and distant Corners.

It is easy to see, how naturally this would produce both *Saturday* and *Monday* Sermons, when so many Persons remarkably concerned about eternal Life, were gathered from far. It was neither wonderful that such Communion should be lively, nor that when such Persons were assembled after so much Travel, they should desire their beloved Ministers to preach more than one Day to them, nor that such Ministers should gratify these Desires. Of this that eminent Professor, the Lady *Culross*, desiring Mr. *Livingstone* to preach on *Monday* at the Kirk of *Shotts*, 1630, is a lively Instance.

Some of these very great and good Men were at last forced, by the evil Eyes and Hardships of the Episcopal Clergy, to go to *Ireland*, where these Practices were continued about Sacraments.

It pleased God remarkably to bless the Labours of these his Servants, so that the Work of the Lord prospered under their

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Hands;

Hands ; and many were converted and built up to eternal Life by their Means.

But here it is to be remarked, in the first Place, that this Flourishing of Religion might have been expected, where such single, holy, diligent, and prayerful Men were; persecuted, for Conscience Sake, from their own native Land, scarcely indulged in the strange one, to which they fled; ever looking out for new Trials, setting their and their Peoples Spirits on Edge, (see Mr. *Livingstone's* Life, third Period,) though there had been no additional Days to Sacrament Sabbaths: It was such a Spirit for Religion which produced these Additions, not these Additions which produced that Spirit: And, as we may venture to say (with all becoming Regard to their Memory, and just Praise in the Churches,) if these excellent and great Men had doubled their Frequency in the Lord's Supper, instead of falling in with these additional Days, Religion, under their Hands would not have flourished less. So it may be added, that without such enlivened Service as theirs was, such additional Things only increase the Formality, and make the Ordinance of Christ the more unwieldy. But,

Secondly, Mr. *Livingstone* says, there were nine Ministers in one Knot, within two Miles or so one of another, full of Duty, full of Love, each having the Sacrament twice yearly. Mr. *Blair* says, he and Mr. *Cunningham* had it eight Times between them, which in all made twenty-two Times at different Seasons; whereat, both these good Men say, most of the Religious in that Place attended.

During this Time, one Sermon on *Saturday*, and one on *Monday*, was all they had, and generally but one Minister assisting another during the whole: This is evident by the Story Mr. *Erskine* cites, of Mr. *Blair's* being with Mr. *Wells*. Vide Mr. *Blair's* Life, Chapter sixth.

With this Frequency of the Lord's Supper, in that remarkable Season of Religion, an Use was made of the *Saturday's* Meeting more to the Purpose of the Solemnity of the Lord's Supper, than a hundred Days without it. See Mr. *Livingstone's* Life, third Period. " We had tolerable Discipline, says he; these who had " offended confessed their Scandal at the *Saturday's* Sermon, and " were admitted:—Such as would not submit, their Names, " for their *Scandal* and *Impenitency*, were read out before the " Congregation, and they debarred, which proved such a Terror, we had few of that Sort."—Mr. *Blair*, on this Subject, at the End of Chapter fourth of his Life, says, " God blessed his " Ordinance (of Discipline,) but a proud Youth, Son of a rich " Man, under Scandal, appealed to the Bishop, on which our
" Discipline

"Discipline was broke; the Bishop's Official compounding with the rich for Money, sending the poor to do Penance, as they call it, and adds, after which I never saw a Blessing on that Work, nor Edification to the People."—This was a little before the Dispersion of these good Men from that strange Land.

In Scotland the Presbyterian Assembly, 1638, made it among their first Cares (so absurd is the Reflection made on the Synod of Glasgow on this Occasion, see Mr. Erskine's Pamphlet, Page 23-) to take Order anent the more frequent Administration of the Supper, in Opposition to the careless Episcopal Men, who had neglected it. *Vide* Act of Assembly, 1638, which says, *Anent Order to be taken, that the Lord's Supper be more frequently administered, both in Burgh and Landward, than it hath been in these Years bygone*, etc.

The above-mentioned Communion in Ireland however, and the additional Days, coming, with a good Report, with the Ministers and People forced again from that Country, about that Time (1638) to Scotland, now in a better Situation for them than formerly, produced the like Practice universally, by the Desires of the better meaning than judging People.—But of this the Assembly, 1645, (where these very Men, Messrs. Blair and Livingstone, two of the happy Instruments of the Revival of Religion in Ireland, were present, as well as a Multitude of our most zealous Men,) seeing further into Consequences, and that certainly these Days would prevent that Frequency of Communion, which God had so much blessed in Ireland, framed the Regulations of that Assembly which now appears so frightful. It were worth some Peoples while to read over the List of that Assembly who made these Orders unanimously, and then (setting aside the Scriptures) reflect on the Decency of Justice, of the Reproaches and Opposition now made to the very same Thing which they approved of.

As to the Fast-Days, I suppose we must look back again to Ireland for them; for in Mr. Livingstone and Blair's Lives we read of a monthly Meeting for fasting at Antrim, where four Ministers usually preached; and tho' this could not be before every Sacrament, as it was much oftener in these Bounds than twelve Times yearly, and far less necessary to it as now; yet, as Mr. Livingstone says, that frequently after these Meetings the Communion was celebrated in one or other of their Parishes, I know no such likely Beginning to our Fasts before our Sacraments as this is; the rather that Bishop Burnet says, History of his Life and Times, P. 63. Folio Edition, That some Protesters had Fast-Days, &c. during the Usurpation: However, Mr. Livingstone, at

Antrim, kept to his old Way, of one Sermon on *Saturday* and *Monday*, and a monthly Meeting in the Bounds, as we may gather from his Life, even till the Restoration. Tho' a greater Frequency, and fewer Sermons, was in Use at that Time, by some in *Scotland*, as Mr. *Livingstone* speaks of it with Commendation, of Mr. *James Forbes*, Minister at *Abercorn*, the Son of a banished Minister, and no lukewarm Man either; for he says of him, "He was an able and zealous Preacher, who after Sermon" behoved to change his Shirt, because he spake with such Vehemency and Sweating. Every Year he gave the Communion "four Times." The Times of Persecution confirmed and increased (as at that Time it was natural to expect it) all these Customs.

This is all, at present, I can say concerning the History of our present Way, and from it we may see, That it was the *Men God* raised up, using the *Means he appointed*, even Frequency in Communion, connected with Discipline, that were the Instruments of reviving Religion; and that the multiplying of these Days and Sermons, as was foreseen, by these very Men (1645) have prevented the Use of these very Means, which God blessed so much in their Hands, for the Flourishing of Religion; till at last it hath come to this, that, with us now, it would be a greater Scandal for a Minister to have the Lord's Supper without a Fast-Day, which even our Fathers had not before their Sacraments, than it would be for him not to yield to the Commandment of Christ of eating of his Supper itself, for half a Score of Years together.

Such Danger all may see there is in departing from the pure Ordinances of Christ, and which they who wish Religion best had much Need to think of in this Instance, *Prov. xxx. 5, 6.*

For the better understanding of some Things in this Paper, by those who may not have seen the *Glasgow Overture*, it is thought proper to insert it here.

GLASGOW, *October 5th, 1748.*

OVERTURE

OF THE

SYNOD of GLASGOW and Ayr.

A Proposal from the Presbytery of *Glasgow*, concerning the more frequent Celebration of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, being laid before the Synod, by their Committee of Overtures, the Synod appointed a select Committee to consider thereof, who reported as follows.

The Committee humbly propose the following Articles to the Consideration of the very Reverend Synod, wherein they are unanimous in their Judgment ;

That the general Proposal, from the Reverend Presbytery of *Glasgow*, deserves the serious Regard and Attention of the Synod,

That it would have an evident Tendency to the Revival and promoting of true Religion, that the Lord's Supper should be more frequently administered among us, than what generally obtains, that holy Ordinance being celebrated only once a Year in each Parish, (excepting in a few Places) and in some Parishes but once in two Years.

That if this be allowed, we must add, that the Manner in which this holy Ordinance is commonly administered among us, greatly obstructs the more frequent Administration of it ; and particularly the Number of Sermons upon such Occasions, and the many Parishes thereby laid vacant upon the Lord's Day, are accompanied with several great Inconveniencies, if not also, too often, with scandalous Profanations of that holy Day.

That, from all this the Committee are of Opinion, it would be for the Interest and Honour of Religion, that some Method were devised, whereby these Inconveniencies and Abuses might be avoided, and the Lord's Supper more frequently celebrated, agreeably to the Word of God, to the Apostolick Practice recorded therein, to the Practice of the Primitive Church, and that

of

of all other Protestant Churches, as well as to several Overtures and Acts of Assembly of this Church in former Times.

That, in the Opinion of the Committee, it would answer this Purpose, if the Lord's Supper were celebrated at least four Times a Year in every Parish; and that only one Day in the preceding Week, either the *Friday* or *Saturday*, were employed in publick Fasting or Preparation; and that the Sacrament were administered on the same Sabbath in all the Parishes of the same Presbytery at least.

And lastly, That it may be proper the Synod appoint the several Presbyteries of their Bounds, to meet for considering the above Proposal, and report their Judgment on the several Articles thereof to the Synod in *April* next, in order to the framing of an Overture from their Synod, to be transmitted to next General Assembly; and that this be communicated to the Correspondents, to be laid before the neighbouring Synods, at their next Meeting.

The Synod, having heard and considered the above Report, did approve of the same, and accordingly transmitted the said Overture to the several Presbyteries, and appointed them to take it under their serious Consideration, after having advertised all their Members to attend punctually the Diet or Diets to be named for that Purpose, and that every Member be required to give his Opinion upon that Subject, and that the Presbyteries send their Opinions in Writing to the next Synod, upon this Overture, or any other Proposal, they may think proper to offer upon the same Subject, to the Meeting of this Synod in *April* next.

Extracted by

THO. WALKER, Syn. Clk.

In this Overture, there are References to two old Acts of Assembly, one in 1638, Sess. 23. 24. about the more frequent Administration of this Ordinance, declaring the Charges of the Elements be rather paid out of that Day's Collection, than that the Congregation want the more frequent Use of the Sacrament.—The other Act is of Assembly 1645, where many Directions about the orderly Administration of the Supper are appointed, which every one may see by turning to *Dundas's* Abridgement.

F I N I S.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE Author of this Paper is concerned, on his own Account, that Mr. *Erskine*, in his *Humble Attempt*, etc. should have, in his Kindness, raised any Expectations about what he was to say on this Subject. — As This was sent to him, so the Hope of a Revival by him, and of the Alterations and Additions he might make, was no small Excitement to any Thoughts of publishing it: How that was prevented, he hath hinted by the Necessity he found of printing himself: Then there was no recalling, nor even detaining for a cooler Review. — The best Thing that can be said now, that it is printed, is, That the Author wrote from the real Conviction of his Mind, and from some Concern, that a more scriptural Way, about the Lord's Supper, were obtaining among us. The Principle which all along is gone upon, is, That in using Means for promoting Christ's Religion, the greatest Success and Blessing is to be expected upon such as are of Christ's Appointment; and the Right or Wrong of what is said in this Letter turns intirely on this Hinge.

A great and inconvenient Distance from the Press hath hindered an exacter Printing. The Reader is particularly desired to observe, in Page 24. that the long Paragraph, beginning at the 7th Line from the Bottom, with these Words, *All Antiquity*, etc. and ending in Middle of Page 25th, was a Note in the original Copy, designed to correspond with, and to illustrate these Words in Line 25th of Page 24th, (*with too much Regard probably to the Offering*,) but which now, by some Mistake, is placed in the Body of the Page, which the Author the rather wishes had not happened, as it interrupts an Argument, which, if his own Judgment were to be taken, is none of the least important, nor improper to be attended to by us, which have occurred to him on this Subject.

Some of the Pointings are also unhappy enough, *e. g.* in Page 67. at Line 15. there should be neither Point nor new Line, as a Sentence there is divided by them.

Readers are seldom at the Trouble of looking at the Errata, yet it is desired, when the Sense or Grammar here is found to be much marred, as is too often the Case, that these following may be turned to, if happily they may satisfy the Mistake, as this was the only Way left the Author to correct such Things.

P. 2. l. 23. dele *for*. l. 24. *for have*, r. *find*. p. 9. l. 4. *for probable*, r. *probably*. l. 23. f. *the other*, r. *other*. p. 10. l. 7. f. *as he*, r. *as the Apostle*. l. 28. f. *afterwards*, r. (*afterwards*, *Acts* xxvi. 16.) l. ult. f. *Apostleship*, r. *Apostleship to the idolatrous Gentiles*. p. 11. l. 3. f. *Benson on the Place*, r. *Benson on the Acts*, Vol. 2. chap. 1. lb. l. 14. f. *on this*, r. *in this*. p. 15. l. 13. f. *frequent*, r. *sitting for frequent*. p. 17. l. 8. f. *bad these*, r. *bad his*. p. 19. l. 7. *from Foot*, f. *and the*, r. *in the*. p. 21. l. 22. f. *as were*, r. *whereof were*. l. 24. f. *Latches*, r. *Latenses*. p. 25. l. 4. f. *Treaties*, r. *Treatises*. p. 26. l. 12. f. *Easter*, r. *Astar*. p. 28. l. 13. *from Foot*, f. *its*, r. *their*. p. 30. l. 7. f. *such*, r. *that such*. p. 31. l. 4. *from Dottom*, f. *they*, r. *the Protestants*. p. 35. l. 5. f. *receiving*, r. *receiving it*. l. 11. f. *we had*, r. (*if it might be called so*) *we had*. p. 38. l. 14. *from Bottom*, f. *arrive*, r. *endeavour habitually*. p. 39. l. 3. f. *the Table*, r. *his Table*. p. 42. l. 11. dele *bestow*. ib. l. 13. *from Bottom*, f. *recollected*, r. *collected*. p. 43. l. 10. *from Bot.* f. *nearest*, r. *nearest*. p. 45. l. 12. dele *who*. p. 46. l. 7. f. *oftner*, r. *often*. p. 53. l. 2. f. *praying*, r. *prying*. ib. l. 13. f. *this*, r. *the*. p. 56. l. 13. f. *many*, r. *in any*. p. 60. l. 6. f. *Ordinance*, r. *Ordinances*. p. 62. l. 4. f. *very*, r. *so very*. p. 68. l. 14. *from Bot.* f. *studied*, r. *Study*. ib. l. 4. f. *if*, r. *or if*. p. 72. l. 13. f. *procured*, r. *be procured*. ib. l. 14. dele *and*. p. 73. l. 5. *from Bot.* f. *open*, r. *be open*. p. 77. l. 14. f. *is Edification*, r. *of Edification*. ib. l. 4. *from Bot.* f. *this*, r. *it*. p. 79. l. 7. f. *and in*, r. *in*. ib. l. 11. f. *in the*, r. *is the*. p. 81. l. 15. f. *and us*, r. *and us the fairer Occasion*. p. 82. l. 12. f. *make us*, r. *make our*.

